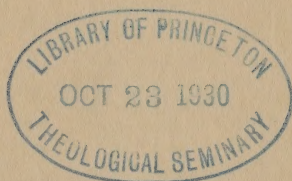


AUGUSTINE
OF HIPPO

Katherine F. Mullany



BR 1720 .A9 M8 1930
Mullany, Katherine Frances.
Augustine of Hippo

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

“THE FIRST MODERN MAN”



AUGUSTINE AND HIS MOTHER

LIBRARY
OCT 23 1930
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

"THE FIRST MODERN MAN"

BY

KATHERINE F. MULLANY

AUTHOR OF "TERESA OF AVILA,"

"MIRIAM OF MAGDALA," ETC.



FREDERICK PUSTET CO. (INC.)

NEW YORK AND CINCINNATI

1930

Nihil Obstat:

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.

Censor Librorum

Imprimatur:

✠PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES

Archiepiscopus Neo-Eboracensis

NEW YORK, MARCH 15, 1930.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

COPYRIGHT 1930 BY
FREDERICK PUSTET CO. (INC.)
IN THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN

Dedication

In memory of one who, like Augustine,
“loved to play”; but who, on his death-bed said:
“No one knows what he does when he sins.
If he did,—he would never sin.”

Foreword

THIS little book is a mere synopsis of the life of St. Augustine. It is a sort of literary tapestry, the threads for which have been drawn from several different works, and then woven together on the loom of Fancy. Its sole aim is to present an attractive and entertaining character-study of one of the most attractive men of all time.

I am greatly indebted to the "St. Augustine" of Louis Bertrand, and to the "St. Augustine" of Rev. E. M. Cutts, D.D. — published in London, England, in 1888. The quotations from "The Confessions" are from the edition published by D. and J. Sadlier & Co.

KATHERINE F. MULLANY

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BIRTHPLACE	3
II. CHILDHOOD DAYS	13
III. THE SCHOOLBOY OF MADAURA	19
IV. AT CARTHAGE	29
V. THE STUDENT OF RHETORIC	35
VI. THE TEACHER OF GRAMMAR	47
VII. THE PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC	57
VIII. THE GOLDEN CITY	67
IX. ROMAN EXPERIENCES	77
X. AMBROSE THE BISHOP	85
XI. MONICA'S INFLUENCE	95
XII. IN THE DEPTHS	103
XIII. THE RETREAT AT CASSIACUM	115
XIV. BAPTISM AND VOCATION	133
XV. THE MONK OF THAGASTE	143

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVI. PRIESTHOOD	153
XVII. AUGUSTINE THE BISHOP	161
XVIII. HIS BOOKS AND CONTROVERSIES	173
XIX. AUGUSTINE AND JEROME	183
XX. LAST DAYS	191

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO
"The First Modern Man"

BIRTHPLACE

CHAPTER I

BIRTHPLACE

The birthplace of Augustine, was a small free-town of Romanized Northern Africa. As it nestled among the surrounding hills, sheltered by oak and pine trees interspersed with cork and ilex, it was a laughing place full of greenery and running waters. A full foliaged land resonant with the sounds of rushing streams and downpouring cataracts, and the songs of nightingales. The woods about Thagaste were filled with these languorous singers of the night, the memory of their music ever remaining with him whom their music had enchanted.

The little free-town was placed at the junction of many Roman roads, over which the Imperial Mail with its glittering equipages and outriders dashed with great speed from city to town and from town to city, stopping only at wayside inns for inner refreshment for man and beast and for change of horses. Augustine, with the other children of the

place, often had a chance to admire the colorful spectacle as it drew up at the inn door — or departed with all the *éclat* of Imperial import.

Thagaste was also a market-town, where the bread stuffs and Numidian wines were bartered for the flocks of the Aures, leather, dates, and the esparto basket-work of the Sahara regions, as well as the marbles of Simitthu and costly citron-wood of which precious tables were made. It was the great mart of woodland Numidia, its warehouse and its bazaar.

Thus images of plenty and of joy surrounded the cradle of Augustine. The smile of Latin beauty welcomed him at every step, for Thagaste had its *Thermae* or bathing-hall paved with mosaics and ornamented with statues; its theatre, its forum, its nymph-fountains and perhaps its amphitheatre. No doubt it had its street double-lined with graceful columns — those things of beauty that are like a free melody singing among the heavy masses of a building, or like white ghosts of beauty rising from amid the rack and devastation of ruins.

The country in which Augustine was born had been subdued by Romans and civilized by Roman culture until its power and magnificence rivaled

that of Rome itself. Its vast fertile regions became one of the most valuable portions of the Empire, and the great granary on which the Imperial city depended for the food of its people.

The Romans, according to their usual policy, had planted numerous colonies on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, and great tracts of its fertile corn lands had been allotted to the noble families of Rome, who cultivated them by the help of slave labor. Wherever towns sprang up they were adorned with temples, basilicas, baths and theatres. The language and manners of Rome were universally adopted, and the province of Africa became more thoroughly Latinized than usual, making it the most Roman outside Italy.

Augustine was born at Thagaste on the 13th of November, A.D. 354; a child who became one of the greatest men of all time; a man whose name and influence after fifteen hundred years, is still powerfully felt in the world of men and Letters; an influence that has been felt through all the intervening ages, and will continue to be felt until the end of time, because he was so naturally human in his faults and failings, so supernaturally sincere in his repentant virtues.

It was in the pleasant little town of Thagaste,

shaded and beautified by the arts of Rome, that the parents of Augustine lived.

His father Patricius, belonged to the order of Decuriones, to the "very brilliant urban council of Thagaste," as an ancient inscription puts it. In his town Patricius was a personage. He certainly must have owned more than the twenty-five acres which were a condition for being elected to the *curia*. He had vineyards and orchards, of which Augustine later on recalled the plentiful and sweet tasting fruits. In fact he lived in considerable style. His sons had a pedagogue — one specially engaged to keep them under his eye — like all the children of the well-to-do.

To hunt, to ride horseback, now and then to go on parade, to look after his tenants and agricultural slaves or drive bargains in which native cunning triumphed, were the ordinary employments of Patricius. In this way he drifted through life on his little domain. At times this indolent man was seized by a sudden passion for work, or again by furious rages. At such moments he struck out right and left. He would even have struck his wife or flogged the skin off her back, if the dignity and Christian forbearance of Monica had not awed him.

Patricius was a licentious man, but a pagan, which partly explains this laxity. He was pagan from habit, from the instinctive conservatism of the citizen and landowner who sticks obstinately to his class and family traditions, although paganism in his day was in bad odor with the Christian government.

His wife, less than half his age, was a Christian. He was well over forty, she but eighteen, when they were married.

It may well be asked how it happened that Monica, a quiet Christian girl, came to marry this rough pagan. The mother of Patricius and the mother of Monica were neighbors; one had an old bachelor son, the other a marriageable daughter. They arranged the marriage between them. Patricius, feeling that his mother was an old woman who would soon be unable to look after the housekeeping, and because he wanted to be like other people, consented to the marriage. Monica, a dutiful and obedient child, agreed to the wedding. It seems that there was no great objection to a union between Christian and pagan, if only social conditions were considered satisfactory. Besides, Patricius was a lukewarm pagan, as to belief, who would not interfere with the practice of his wife's religion.

Nor did he ever betray her confidence in this respect.

The first child born of this union was a son named Navigius; the second, a daughter whose name has been lost, but who became a nun; the third child was Augustine. His mother was twenty-two at his birth.

Monica came of a family strictly Catholic on both sides for many generations. They never became affected by the Donatist schism which became such a power in the land. Still, if the faith of the young girl had been confirmed from earliest years, it was not so much to the lessons of her mother that she owed it, as to the training of an old woman servant, of whom she always spoke with gratitude.

Because of her great faith, this simple slave was revered as a saint by her owners, who entrusted her with the care of their daughters. She was a strict disciplinarian, who would stand no trifling with her rules. She forbade drinking water except at meals. "You drink water now" said she "because you can't get at the wine. In time to come, when you are married and have bins and cellars of your own, you'll turn up your nose at water, and your habit of drinking will overcome you."

Monica came very near fulfilling the prophecy.

Before she was married, she used to be sent to the cellar with a slave to draw wine from the cask. Before pouring it into the flagon she would sip just a little. Being unaccustomed to wine she was unable to drink more at first; it was too strong for her. After a while, however, she found it tasted rather nice, and, in time, came to drink it greedily by the cupful. One day, the slave girl who accompanied her, began to grumble and Monica rebuked her sharply. The girl retorted by calling her a — drunkard! It was a bitter humiliation to the self-respect of the Christian girl, and caused her to overcome her taste for wine. Ever afterwards she was most abstemious in the use of the pleasant liquor.

When she married Patricius she was to all appearances, a very reserved girl; cold, precise and even strict, in attending to her religious duties; somewhat exaggerating her austerity in the practice of Christian virtue, because of her hatred for the brutalities and careless morals that paganism condoned. Yet, she could unbend when necessary. She was prudently tactful and possessed practical common sense, of which she gave many a proof in her management of Augustine. Hard to herself, she veiled her uncompromising religion under an

unchangeable sweetness of manner, which was rather a result of grace than a natural gift.

Some of her neighbors, who had husbands far less choleric than Patricius, never-the-less were beaten by them. When they came to call on Monica they showed her the marks of their husband's brutality, and wondered that she never bore signs of like maltreatment. Her answer was: "Blame your own tongues!" She had the good sense not to argue with her husband when he was angry, and never had a quarrel with him despite his many failings. Her patience and kindness touched brutal and dissolute Patricius, who, in time, settled down and became a quite satisfactory husband. Towards the end of his life he became a Christian and died repentant of his sins.

Augustine, born of a Christian mother, and who was to become the great defender of the faith, was not baptised at his birth. In the early Church, especially in Africa, it was not customary to do so, from the conviction that sins committed after baptism were more grievous than those committed before its reception. But he was enrolled among the catechumens; the sign of the Cross was made upon his forehead, and the symbolic salt was placed between his lips, when he was given the name of Aurelius Augustinus.

74
20
94

CHILDHOOD DAYS

CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD DAYS

As Augustine grew in years he developed a love for play that, at school, earned for him many a flogging. "I loved to play" he says, with much simplicity, in his Confessions. And play he did, with might and main, as he would continue to do everything he undertook through all his life. At games of ball, or in mimic battles where boys took sides, as Romans against Carthaginians or as Greeks against Trojans, he excelled; but he did not love to study. The drudgery of study galled him as it usually does gifted minds. He especially hated Greek, and never became proficient in that language.

No doubt an incipient modern poet expressed his feelings exactly when, in the temporary absence of the teacher, he wrote on the blackboard:

"Many are the days that I have studied Greek,
But little is the Greek I know.

I wish Mr. B—— would let me off from Greek,
I fail and stumble so.”

Neither Mr. B—— nor Augustine’s pedagogue responded as the pupils desired. In the case of the future saint, the penalty incurred was so drastic that the memory was a sore one ever after. He also loved to play “circus” and imitate the gladiators and chariot races of the arena, and the actors of the theatre. He preferred, however, games in which the mind has chief part. He listened to stories with delight, and repeated them to his young friends, thus trying on an audience of boys that charm of speech by which later he was to subdue crowds.

In the midst of these amusements he fell ill, and they thought he was going to die. In this extremity it was he himself, who asked for baptism. Monica was making haste to have the sacrament administered, when suddenly, against all expectation, the child recovered. Again, baptism was deferred and for the same reason: to lessen the gravity of the sins Augustine was bound to commit. His mother, who no doubt foresaw some of them, fell in with the custom.

Augustine, knowing nothing of his mother’s reasons, begged for baptism, he tells us. This was not

so strange a thing in so young a boy, for he lived in a house where all the servants were catholics, and he had heard much of the necessity of being baptised. Anyway he recovered, and took up again his child's life, divided between play, dawdling and school.

School! painful memory for Augustine! The *primus magister*, the elementary teacher was a 'terror,' armed with a long switch which came down without pity on idle boys. He was often punished, even so cruelly thrashed, that the master's scourge filled him with unspeakable dread. When he was smarting all over from cuts and bruises, and came to his parents to complain, they only laughed at him; even pious Monica made fun of him. Then the poor child, not knowing where to turn in his terror, remembered hearing of a Being very powerful and good, who defended the orphan and the oppressed, and he cried out to Him from the depths of his child's heart praying: "O God, please grant that I am not whipped at school!" Forty years afterward, he denounces these punishments with horror. "For who is he that weighing things well" he writes, "will justify my being flogged when a boy, for playing at ball, because by that play, I was hindered from learning so quickly those arts with

which, when grown up, I should play worse; as he was meanwhile doing by whom I was corrected; who, if overcome in some petty dispute by his fellow-teacher, was more racked by choler and envy than I was when outdone by my playfellow in a game at ball."

Never-the-less, despite his hatred for the dull monotony of study, he was quick to learn, his precocious intelligence being remarked by everyone. It became clear that such gifts should not be neglected. Monica, ambitious for his future, advised Patricius to make Augustine read for a learned profession.

In those days rhetoric led to everything. Some of the professors who went from town to town giving lectures made considerable fortunes. At Thagaste they pointed with admiration to Victorinus a fellow countryman, who had made a big reputation overseas and had his statue in the Roman Forum. The great Pertinax himself, did he not begin as a simple teacher of grammar, and become Proconsul of Africa and then Emperor of Rome? Augustine's parents resolved to make sacrifices for his education; and, as the schools at Thagaste were inadequate, they decided to send this very promising boy of theirs, to Madaura.

THE SCHOOLBOY OF MADAURA

CHAPTER III

THE SCHOOLBOY OF MADAURA

Madaura was about thirty miles from Thagaste. The way to it was along the military road which ran from Hippo to Theveste, — a great Roman causeway paved with large flags on the outskirts of towns, and carefully pebbled over the rest of the way. Erect upon the high saddle of his horse, Augustine got his first glimpse of the poetry of the open road.

The African roads of those days were very amusing and full of interesting sights. Pauses were made at inns with walls as thick as the ramparts of citadels, their interiors bordered by stables built in arcades, heaped with traveller's packs and harness. In the centre were the trough and cistern. To the little rooms opening in a circle onto the balconies, the smell of oil and fodder drifted upward and the noise of men and beasts of burden, and of camels as they entered magestically, curving their long

necks under the lintel of the door. Then there was talk with merchants from the south, who brought news of the nomad countries and had stories to tell about them. And then, without hurry, a start was made for the next stage of the journey. Long files of chariots were encountered carrying provisions to the soldiers of the garrisoned frontier, or the State-distributed corn of the Roman people to the seaports, or from time to time the *lectica* of a bishop on a tour of visitation, or a litter, with close drawn curtains, carrying a matron or some great personage. Suddenly all pulled quickly to one side of the road, and there passed by, at full speed, in a cloud of dust, a messenger of the Imperial Post.

This road from Hippo to Theveste was one of the busiest and most picturesque in the province, being one of its main arteries of trade. At first the appearance of the country resembles the neighborhood of Thagaste. The wooded and mountainous landscape still has its little rolling hills and sheets of verdure. Here and there the road skirts the deeply ravined valley of the Mejerda. At the foot of precipitous slopes, the river can be heard brawling in a torrent over its stony bed. There are swift descents among thickets of Juniper and the fringed roots of dwarf pines. Then as the descent con-

tinues, the land becomes leaner and spaces bare of vegetation appear oftener. At last, upon a table-land, Madaura comes into view, all white in the midst of the vast tawny plain, where to-day nothing is seen but a mausoleum in ruins, the remains of a Byzantine fortress and other vague traces of a past civilization vanishing away. Coming from the wooded country of Thagaste, its nakedness is startling. In the foreground a woman's scarlet *haic*, gives the single stain of bright color breaking the indefinite brown and grey of the plain. It is one of the stark places of the desert world. But, towards the east, the architecture of the mountains, wildly sculptured, stands out against the level reaches of the horizon. Etched upon the clear background of the sky, are lateral spurs and a cone like to the mystical representation of Tanit. Towards the south, crumbling, isolated crags appear, scattered about like gigantic pedestals uncrowned of their statues, or like the pipes of an organ raised there to capture and attune the cry of the great winds of the steppe.

It was here, between Madaura and Thagaste, during the years of his eager youth, that Augustine gathered together the seeds of sensations and images which, later on, were to burst forth into fiery metaphors in the Confessions, and in his homilies

and paraphrases of Scripture. In the after years he will not have time to observe, or he will have lost the power. Rhetoric will have stretched its commonplace veil between him and the never ceasing springtide of the earth. Ambition will turn him away from those sights which only reveal themselves to unselfish hearts indifferent to the ambitions of life. But, later on, Faith will seize hold of him to the exclusion of everything else. He will no longer perceive creation, save at odd moments, in a sort of metaphysical dream, and, so to speak, across the glory of the Creator. But, in these youthful years all things burst upon him with extraordinary force and ecstasy. His undulled senses swallowed greedily the whole banquet offered by this wide world to his hunger for pleasure. This craving for sensation will still exist in the great Christian teacher, and betray itself in the warm and richly colored figures of his style.

Not less than this light drenched plain about Madaura, the town itself must have impressed Augustine.

It was an old Numidian city, proud of its antiquity. Like Theveste it had its temples with pillars and Corinthian porticoes, its triumphal arches, its forum surrounded by a covered gallery and peopled

with statues. In the evening, or at the hour of siesta, he would often stretch himself in the shade of their pedestals to play at dice or bones. The marble slabs of the portico made a good place to play or sleep. At Madaura he lived in a miraculous world, where everything charmed his senses and his mind, stimulating his precocious instinct for beauty.

The majority of the population were pagans, especially the aristocrats, and pagan festivals were frequent. They were markedly devoted to Bacchus and indulged in brutish drunken orgies in his honor. The love feasts, too, were alluring, and the carnivals attractive to the pleasure loving boy.

There is no doubt that his host was some friend of Patricius, a pagan like himself. The instruction given him was altogether pagan, as the schoolmasters were nearly all pagans.

Thus, during the most impressionable years of his life, the unbaptised boy was completely under pagan influence. Consequently, the Christian lessons of Monica and the nurses at Thagaste became but dim memories. Bitterly would his mother rue the days when she had twice postponed his reception of the saving grace of Baptism, and through worldly wise motives permitted him to go to pagan Madaura. For many years she would weep scald-

ing tears of sorrow for his sinful life, and her continuous prayers remain unanswered until her expiation was complete. Augustine never ceased deploring the deprivation of Baptism which would have saved him from the complete victory of evil over his soul; as it was, he was but as a straw in the wind of passions that swept over him.

When he returned to his parents, he was simply a pagan; a fifteen years old pagan. As the grammarians at Madaura could teach him nothing more, it was decided to send him to Carthage, where the best rhetoricians were to be had; but, to do this, it would be necessary to make unusual sacrifices. Still, as it was the fashion and a point of honor for Numidian families to send their sons to finish their education at the provincial capital, Patricius was most eager to do this for his son, who at Madaura had shown himself a very brilliant pupil, and ought not, therefore, to be pulled up halfway down the course. But the life of a student cost a good deal, and Patricius had no money. As usual his affairs were muddled. He was obliged to wait for rents from his farm, to grind down his tenants and, ultimately, to ask for a loan from his rich patron, Romanianus. All this needed time and diplomacy.

Days and months passed, and Augustine, with

nothing to do, joined in with easily made friends and gave himself up to the pleasures of his time of life, — like all the young men of Thagaste. When he accuses himself of these escapades in his Confessions, he uses the most scathing language. He speaks of them with horror and disgust.

Thus started, he was not able to stop halfway on the road of pleasure, as he never did anything by halves. In these vulgar revels of the ordinary wild youth, he again wanted to be first as he was at school. “I shamed to be outdone in shame,” he tells us. He stirred up his companions and drew them after him. Among them was Alypius, the friend of his life, who shared his faults and mistakes; who followed him even in his conversion, and afterwards became Bishop of Thagaste.

Scandalized though she might be at his conduct, Monica loved this favorite son, as a woman frustrated of love in an ill assorted marriage, may spend her pent up affections on her child. In Augustine she loved the being she wished she could love in her husband. But there was none of the spoiling, or indulgence, or culpable weakness which enervates maternal tenderness, and makes it injurious to the energy of a manly character. She was

stern, even severe in reprimands and pleadings, — to be laughed at for her pains.

At this time Monica began praying in earnest for this wayward boy of hers; an apostolate of prayer that for weary years would be without seeming effect; and then in the end to be answered in a way far transcending all her dreams and desires, rewarding her with an overflowing measure of happiness, for all her tearful waiting.

Patricius, at last, managed to get the necessary money for his son's education, and Augustine could take the road to Carthage, that splendid city of culture and of pleasure. Craving for knowledge and glory, he left home, yet was oppressed with an inexplicable sadness.

AT CARTHAGE

CHAPTER IV

AT CARTHAGE

Carthage was one of the five great cities of the Empire. It was the seaport capital of the whole western Mediterranean. With its broad new streets, its elegant villas, its splendid temples and palaces, its great docks, its colorful cosmopolitan population, it astonished and delighted the school-boy of Madaura.

There he was, his own master, with nobody to counsel and direct him. He mentions the gorgeous Romanianus who had a winter dwelling there, as a high and generous friend who helped him, not only with his purse, but with his friendship. However, taken up with his pleasures and business affairs, as he was, he could not have been much of a guide for Monica's son. There is no doubt but that Augustine came to Carthage with a strong desire for knowledge and renown, yet still more athirst for the romance of life.

The splendid, pleasure loving city enervated the

senses but was an enchantment for the eyes. From the top of the impressive flight of steps which led up to the temple of Esculapius on the summit of the Acropolis, the young student could see the huge, symmetrically planned city, with its citadel walls spread far and wide, its gardens, its blue waters, flaxen plains and the mountains. At sunset the twin harbors, rimmed by the quays, shone like ruby lenses. To the left, the Lake of Tunis, stirless, without a ripple, as rich in ethereal lights as a Venetian lagoon, radiated in ever-changing sheens, delicate and splendid. In front, across the bay dotted with sails of ships close-hauled to the wind, beyond the breeze-swept and shimmering intervals, the mountains of Rhodes raised their aerial summits against the sky. What an outlook for a young man dreaming of fame! And what more stimulating spot than this Mount Byrsa where so many heroic memories were gathered and superimposed. The great, dusty plains which bury themselves far off in the desert, the mountains, the isles, the headlands, all bowed before the hill of which Virgil sang, and seemed to do her reverence. She held in awe the innumerable tribes of the barbaric continent; she was mistress of the sea. Rome herself, from the heights of her Palatine, surged less imperial.

More than any other of the young men seated

with him on the benches of the school of rhetoric, Augustine hearkened to the dumb appeals which came from the ancient ruins and new palaces of Carthage.

But to a mind like his, the great city had more subtle allurements in reserve. He was fascinated by her theatres, by the verses of her poets, by the melodies of her musicians. He shed tears at the plays of Menander and Terrence; he lamented over the misfortunes of separated lovers; he shared their quarrels, rejoiced and despaired with them. Such was Augustine, given over to the irresponsibility of his eighteen years, — a heart spoiled by romantic literature, a mind impatient to try every intellectual adventure in the most corrupting and bewitching city known to pagan centuries, set in the most entrancing landscapes in the world.

But Carthage did not offer only pleasure to the student of rhetoric. In the sanctuaries and schools, in the squares and streets, he could see pass all the disciples of all the systems, the props of all the superstitions, the devotees of all religions. On the opposite side from pagan worship, the sects which had sprung from Christianity sprouted. Arianism was dying out and orthodox Catholicism was in a very critical state. The Donatists had captured its congregations and its churches; they were unques-

tionably in the majority. They boasted that they were the Church, the unique and only Church of Christ. Doubt darkened many consciences. Amid these many controversies, where was the truth? Among whom did the Apostolic tradition dwell?

To put the finishing touch on this anarchy, a sect likewise derived from Christianity — Manicheism — began to have numerous adepts in Africa. Watched with suspicion by the Government, it concealed part of its doctrine, — the most scandalous and subversive. But the very mystery that enveloped it, helped to get it adherents.

Among all these apostles preaching their own gospel, these theologians reciprocally insulting and excommunicating one another, Augustine brought the superficial scepticism of his eighteenth year. He wanted no more of the religion of his mother! He was a good talker, a clever dialectician; he was in a hurry to emancipate himself, to win freedom for his own way of thinking as for his own way of living; and he meant to enjoy his youth. With such gifts and dispositions, he could only choose among these doctrines that which would most help along the qualities of his mind, at once flattering his intellectual pretensions, and leaving his pleasure-loving instincts a loose rein.

THE STUDENT OF RHETORIC

CHAPTER V

THE STUDENT OF RHETORIC

However strong were the attractions of the great city, Augustine well knew that he had not been sent there to amuse himself, or trifle as an amateur with philosophy. He was poor and had to secure his future. His family counted on him. He knew of the financial difficulties of his parents, and by what sacrifices they had supplied him with money to finish his studies. Necessarily he had to be a student who worked.

With his extraordinary facility, he stood out at once among his fellow-students. At the rhetoric school he was not only at the top, but he was the leader of his companions. He led in everything: rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, music, science and philosophy. Having gone through the whole scholastic system, he thought of studying law. For a gifted young man it was the shortest and surest road to money and honors.

Unhappily for him, hardly was he settled down at Carthage when his father died. This made his future again problematical. How was he to keep up his studies without the money sent by his father? The affairs of Patricius must have been in a very bad condition. But Monica, clinging to her ambitious plans for her son, managed to triumph over all difficulties and continued to send him the remittance. Romanianus, the philanthropist of Thagaste, was the one who again came to the aid of the hard-up student. The young man, set at ease about expenses, light-heartedly resumed his studious and dissipated life.

Augustine is frank in his admissions regarding the character of his university career. The system was professorial, the students attending such lectures as they pleased, paying their fees to the professors. They were practically under no discipline, and were as unruly and independent as are students of to-day under the same system. They acquired the proverbial Carthaginian passion for the circus; they roamed about the forum and the principal streets; they were noisy and insubordinate in the schools, where a group of them would come in riotously in the middle, or leave before the end, of the lecture or disputation. The leaders called them-

selves "Eversores," most appropriately, as they played brutal pranks on unoffending passersby or modest women. Augustine's friendship for one of them made him one of the set; and the false shame which is one of the great temptations of young men, made him take a lively part in their follies and vices, though he protests he always disliked their brutal practical jokes. As in Madaura, he was ashamed to be outdone in shame.

The bohemianism in which his friends revelled could not hold him indefinitely. Strictly brought up in the hard and frugal discipline of the provinces, he was affected by his training. Besides, the career that he desired, that of a barrister or professor, had the preliminary obligation to maintain a certain outward decorum. In the midst of his most disreputable performances he aspired to be known for his fashion and his wit. Politeness of speech and manners, the courteous mutual deference of the best society, was the ideal of this budding professor of rhetoric.

Anxiety about his future, joined to the usual disenchantments, ere long sobered the student; he just took his fling, and then settled down to study. The apprentice to rhetoric liked his business. Up to his last breath, despite his efforts to change, he con-

tinued to love rhetoric. He handled words like a worker in verbals, who is aware of their price and knows all their resources. At the school he took extreme pleasure in declaiming. He was applauded; the professor held him up as an example to others. But, as he had to live, and Monica's remittances were small — the generosity of Romanianus having its limit — he had to look out for something to do that would enlarge his students' purse. He wrote verses for poetic competitions, and perhaps acted as coach to students less advanced.

At this time of his life, he was riveting friendships which were never to be broken. Besides Alypius, who had followed him to Carthage, there was Nebridius, a not less dear companion, fated to die early; Honoratus, whom he drew into his errors and later did his best to enlighten; and finally, the mysterious young man whose name he does not mention, and whose loss he mourned so plaintively.

They lived together in continual fervor and enthusiasm, frequenting the theatre where Augustine was able to satisfy his desire for tender emotions and romantic adventures. They had musical parties and tried over the popular airs of the Odeum. The Carthaginians were music mad. As

Bishop of Hippo, in his sermons he recalled a mason upon his scaffolding, a shoemaker at his last, singing the arias of well-known musicians. "What delighted me in the intercourse with my friends" he writes "was the talk, the laughter, the good turns we did one another, the common studies of the masters of eloquence, the comradeship, now grave, now gay; the differences that left no sting, as of a man differing with himself, the spice of disagreement seasoning the monotony of consent. Each by turns would instruct or listen; impatiently we missed the absent friend and tasted the joy of his return."

Such ties as these gave Augustine a permanent disgust for the rowdy companions of former days; he went no more with the "Wreckers."

There was danger of his growing torpid in this soft life, when suddenly a rude shock awoke him. He considered it providential when a copy of Cicero's *Hortensius* fell into his hands. He was about nineteen when the time came for him to read and explain this philosophical dialogue. He had no interest in the book, merely reading it as a duty because it figured in the schedule. As he read, all of a sudden, a great, unexpected light shone between the lines. The book is lost, but we know

from Augustine that it contained eloquent praise of wisdom. He has preserved for us some of the phrases which moved him so deeply. "If, as pretend the philosophers of old, who are also the greatest and most illustrious, we have an immortal soul, it behooves us to think that the more it has persevered in its way, that is to say, in reason, love, and the pursuit of truth, and the less it has been intermingled and stained with human error and passion, the easier will it raise itself and soar again to the skies."

This ideal appeared to him so beautiful, so well worth the sacrifice of all he had hitherto loved, that nothing counted for him any more. For wisdom he felt himself ready to give up the world. But these heroic outbursts do not, as a rule, last very long in natures as impressionable as Augustine's. Yet they are not entirely thrown away.

The illusion was brief. He tells us that he grew cool about *Hortensius* because he did not find the name of Christ in it. The teaching of his mother had not been entirely vain, as this one seed had taken root; he says no teaching ever affected him seriously if the name of Christ was lacking.

The fever calmed, he set himself to reflect. The ancient philosophers promised him wisdom. But

Christ also promised it. Was not the Gospel ideal more essentially human? The Ciceronian dialogue, by disappointing his longing for truth, gave him the idea of knocking at the door of the Church, to find out if on that side there might not be a practical road for him. Thus he considered the reading of *Hortensius* a providential occurrence. Although he fell back into his errors, he takes credit for his effort. He recognises in it the first sign of his conversion. He then began to study the Holy Scriptures, more or less seriously, in order to instruct himself in them. But to go to the Bible by the way of Cicero was to take the wrong road. Augustine got lost there. The direct style, which only cares about saying things, and not about the way they are said, repelled the pupil of Carthage rhetoricians, the imitator of the harmonious Ciceronian sentences. "At that time," he says, "I was not the man to bow my head so as to enter its door." He turned his back upon the Bible, as he had upon *Hortensius*, and went to find other pastures. Never-the-less his mind had been set in motion and would never more find rest, until he had found the truth. He asked this truth from all the sects, and from all the churches; then, in despair, flung himself into Manicheism.

Some have professed amazement that this honest, practical mind should have stuck fast in a doctrine so tortuous, so equivocal, so contaminated by fancies so grossly absurd. But, perhaps, it is forgotten that the leaders of the sect did not deliver the bulk of the doctrine all at once to their catechumens: the entire initiation was a matter of several degrees. Augustine never went higher than the lowest, that of a simple "auditor." The attraction they had for fine minds was their declaring themselves rationalists. To reconcile faith with natural science and philosophy, has been the fad of heresiarchs and freethinkers in all ages. The Manichees bragged they had succeeded. They went everywhere, crying out: "Truth, Truth!" That suited nineteen years old Augustine very well; it was just what he was looking for. He hastened to the preaching of these humbugs, impatient to receive at last this "truth," so noisily announced. From what they said, it was contained in several large books written by their prophet under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. They were ponderous volumes, richly bound in vellum and embellished with striking illuminations. The testimony of such a mass of writings was impressive; but the priests did not open them. To allay the impatience of their

hearers, they amused them by criticising the books and dogmas of the Catholics. (How like our modern opponents!) This preliminary criticism was the first lesson of their instruction. They pointed out the incoherence and interpolations in the Bible. According to them the greater part of the Scriptures had been foisted on the world by the Jews. They sapped the Gospels with syllogisms. Of course these exercises in logic attracted the youthful Augustine. With his extraordinary dialectical subtlety, he soon became quite proficient himself,—indeed much better than his masters. He made speeches in their assemblies, fenced against a text, peremptorily refuted it, and reduced his adversaries to silence. He was applauded, covered with praise. A religion which brought him sure successes must be the true one!

In after years he tried to explain to himself how it was that he fell into Manicheism, and could only find two reasons: "The first" he says "was a friendship which took hold of me under I know not what appearance of kindness, and was like a cord about my neck. . . . The second was those unhappy victories that I almost always won in our disputes."

But there was another reason he mentions else-

where, and which had perhaps more weight. This was the loose moral code which the Manichees authorized, by teaching that we are not responsible for the evil we do. Our sins and vices are the work of the Evil One, — the God of Darkness, the enemy of the God of Light. Now, at the time when Augustine was received as “ auditor,” he had special need of excusing his conduct by a moral system so convenient and indulgent. He had just joined himself to the girl he loved, and with whom he lived for fourteen years without the legal sanction of marriage.

THE TEACHER OF GRAMMAR

CHAPTER VI

THE TEACHER OF GRAMMAR

Augustine finished his studies at Carthage when he was about twenty, which was the required age. It may appear surprising that such a brilliant student had not completed his course sooner. But it must be remembered that after his return from Madaura, he had lost nearly a year at Thagaste. Besides, the life at Carthage had so many charms for him he had been in no hurry to leave. As it was, he must now look for a position as a means of support. He must do something, and as quickly as possible. Having but just ceased being a student, he could not dream of becoming a professor in a great city like Carthage: setting himself up in rivalry to so many celebrated masters. The best thing he could do, if he did not want to vegetate, was to look about for some more modest position. Romanianus, his protector, urged him to go back to Thagaste. This rich man had a son almost grown

up, whom it was necessary to put into the hands of a tutor. Augustine, so often helped by the father, was naturally thought of to look after the youth. Furthermore, Romanianus, who appreciated Augustine's talents, must have been anxious to attract him to Thagaste and keep him there. So he asked this young man whom he patronized, to return to his natal place and open a grammar school, promising him pupils and the support of his influence. Monica, no doubt, added her entreaties to those of the great head of the Thagaste municipality, and Augustine yielded. In his native town, he opened a "Wordshop" as he called it disdainfully.

By this time he had become a Manichee fanatic. Carried away by the neophyte's zeal, puffed up by his triumphs at the public meetings at Carthage, he meant to shine before his fellow-townsmen, and perhaps convert them. When he departed from Carthage, his mind was made up to proselytise.

The reception which Monica had in reserve for him was going to surprise him considerably. Since her widowhood, the wife of Patricius had singularly advanced in the way of Christian perfection. Her austerity had increased with her zeal. She set an example of strictest piety for the people of Thagaste.

The widow compelled all about her to the same severe rules which she herself observed. In this rigid atmosphere, the student from Carthage, with his free, fashionable airs, must have caused painful astonishment. Monica felt at once that she and her son no longer understood each other. She began by remonstrating with him. Augustine rebelled. Things grew worse when the young professor presumed to boast as loudly as possible that he was a Manichee. His mother, deeply wounded in her piety and motherly tenderness, ordered him to give up his errors. He refused, and replied with sarcasm. As he was not content with being lost himself, but drew others into peril by disputations and speech-making before his friends, — abusing his power of language to throw trouble into consciences — Monica grew to consider him a public menace, and with indignant sorrow drove him from the house. She was filled with horror at his treason.

This must have been a big scandal in Thagaste, but it does not seem that Augustine cared much. Put in interdict by his mother, he went to Romanianus. The sumptuous hospitality there received soon consoled him for his exile from home. If his self-esteem had been affronted, the pride of

living familiarly with so important a personage was, for a vain young man, a very full compensation.

The villa of Romanianus was an immense and elegant affair. The main building had a lofty doorway and a belvedere of many stories. As in Roman villas, it had its interior galleries, and wings to right and left. In front lay the terraces, with gardens whose straight walks were edged by closely clipped hedges of box, leading to pools and jets of water, to arbors covered with ivy, and to nymph-fountains ornamented with statues and columns. In these African gardens there was a particular place called the "philosopher's corner," where the mistress of the house used to go to read or dream. Her folding chair was placed in the shadow of a palm tree; her "philosopher" followed her, holding her parasol and leading her favorite little dog.

It is easy to imagine that Augustine managed to endure his mother's severity without much distress, in this fine country house, where he could indulge his natural inclination, which, he says, was epicureanism. At this time the only thing he thought about was pleasure. While with Romanianus, he shared in all the pleasant things of life, and only bothered about his pupils when he had nothing better to do. He accuses himself of having "flung"

his host into his own errors. When the restless young professor gave up Manicheism for Platonic philosophy, Romanianus followed in his wake and took on the airs of a philosopher. Later on, when Augustine came back to Catholicism, this faithful friend followed where he led. The orator of twenty had extraordinary charm.

While he was leading this delightful life with Romanianus, Monica was plunged in grief at his conduct. She implored God continually to draw him from his errors. She also realized her unwisdom in sending him away, plainly seeing that his present quarters were not good for the prodigal. It would be better to have him at home. Through intense praying came a dream which quickened her determination to hasten his return. "She dreamed that she was weeping and lamenting, with her feet planted on a wooden rule" writes Augustine "when she saw coming towards her a radiant youth who smiled upon her cheerfully. He asked her the reason for her sorrow and daily tears, and when she told him she was bewailing my perdition, he bade her be of good comfort, to look and see, for where she was, there was I also. She looked, and saw me standing by her side on the same rule."

Filled with joy by this promise from on high,

Monica asked her son to come home. He came, but with the quibbles of the sophist, the rhetorician cavilled against his mother, saying: "Since, according to your dream, we are both on the same rule, that means that you are going to be a Manichean." "No," answered Monica, "he did not say where he is you will be, but where you are, he will be."

Augustine confesses that this strong good sense made an impression on him; never-the-less he did not change. For still nine years he remained a Manichee.

As a last resort, Monica begged a bishop she knew, a man deeply versed in the Scriptures, to speak with her son, and refute his errors. But he refused, on the ground that he was puffed up with the novelty of the heresy, and with having perplexed in argument some who had unskilfully encountered him; and that, in his present frame of mind, he was unteachable. "Let him alone for a while" he advised "and pray God for him, and he will in time find out for himself the error and impiety of his present opinions." He then told her that he himself had been a Manichean, and that reading and reflection had caused him to abandon the sect. And when she was not satisfied with this, but still urged him to undertake the controversy,

he, a little annoyed by her persistence, answered a trifle impatiently: "Go thy way, and God will help thee, for it is not possible that the child of such tears should perish."

Sometime after his return home, a friend whom he loved intensely, and had induced to join the Manichees, fell ill of a fever. As all hope of his recovery was at an end, they baptised him, according to custom. He grew better, was almost cured. As soon as he could bear it, Augustine turned into jest the baptism which he had received when he was unconscious. "He shrank from me as from an enemy," says Augustine "and with wonderful new-found courage warned me never to speak so to him again, if I wished to remain his friend. I was so astounded and confused that I said no more, resolving to wait until he should regain his health, when I would deal with him as I would."

A few days afterward, in Augustine's absence, his friend died, and he gave himself up to the wildest grief. It was the greatest sorrow of his young life. Thagaste became intolerable. With his usual impulsiveness, he all at once decided to go back to Carthage and open a rhetoric school. It is more than likely that he did not tell Monica, confiding only in Romanianus who, as he had all kinds of

reasons for keeping him at Thagaste, at first strongly objected. But Augustine pointed to his future, to his ambition to win fame. Was he going to bury it in that little town?

Romanianus yielded, and with his usual generosity, paid all expenses. Augustine had spent scarcely a year at Thagaste. He was therefore still a mere boy when he went back to Carthage, to become a mere purveyor of words, as he scornfully expressed it.

THE PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC

CHAPTER VII

THE PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC

Augustine was to live for nine years at Carthage, — nine years that would be squandered in sterile disputes, unfortunate for himself and others.

This was the most uneasy and, at intervals, the most painful time of his life. Hardly had he returned than he had to struggle against ever increasing money difficulties. Not only had he to get his own living but that of others: the unfortunate girl with whom he lived, and the child born to them at about this time. He was named Adeodatus, "Gift of God," — though Augustine considered him anything but that — at first. But when he saw him, he was filled with joy and cherished him as a real gift from God. His heart was ever kind and loving.

To keep his family he really became "a dealer in words." Although only twenty, his experience as a grammar teacher at Thagaste allowed him to take his place among the rhetoricians at Carthage.

Thanks to Romanianus, he secured pupils at once. His protector sent his two sons. Alypius, "the brother of his heart," was another, and a certain Eulogius was a fourth.

Augustine's knowledge, when he began to lecture, could not have been very deep — having but recently quitted the students' bench himself. Like many another, in teaching he taught himself. It was at this time that he did most of the reading which afterwards added substance to his polemics and treatises. He says that he read everything he could lay his hands on, and was very proud of having read and understood the "Ten Categories" of Aristotle, without any assistance from a master.

Therefore, in spite of family and professional cares, he did not neglect his intellectual leanings. The conquest of truth remained his great ambition. He still hoped to find it in Manicheism, but began to think it was a long time coming. The leaders of that sect were a bit suspicious of him. They feared his acute and subtle mind, so quick to detect the flaw in a thesis or argument. That is why they postponed his initiation into their secret doctrines. By way of appeasing the enormous activity of his intelligence, they turned him on to controversy, and the critical discussion of the Scriptures. Augustine

triumphed in such disputes, and was vain because he excelled in them. He confesses this himself.

When he grew tired of this negative criticism and asked for more substantial food, they set him at work upon some doctrine calculated to appeal to a young imagination by its poetical or philosophical coloring. He says they were like bird-snarers who defile all the water places where birds drink — except one pool; and about this they set their snares. The birds all fly there, not because it is better, but because there is no other water, and they know not where else to go and drink. So, he not knowing where to quench his thirst for truth, was fain to make the best of the confused pantheism of the Manichees.

What remains worthy of note is, that however unstable his own convictions, he converted everyone about him. Alypius, Nebridius, Honoratus, Marcianus, perhaps Licentius and his brother — the sons of Romanianus — all were victims of his persuasive tongue which afterwards drew them back from their errors.

The fourth century was no longer of strong Christian faith. On the other hand the death agony of paganism was marked by a new attack of the lowest credulity and superstition, which the Church

energetically warred against, as some of the greatest minds of the period were attracted by it, and were adepts in the occult sciences. Augustine, who was then separated from Christianity, followed the general impulse, together with the young men under his influence.

Astrology attracted him by its apparent science, as its teachers called themselves "mathematicians"; thus seeming to borrow from the exact sciences something of their solidity. He often discussed astrology with a Carthage physician, a man of great learning, named Vindicianus, who afterward became Proconsul. In vain did he point out to the young rhetorician that the pretended prophecies of the mathematicians were the effect of chance; Augustine clung obstinately to his chimera.

Thus, dazzled by all the intellectual phantasms of the time, he strayed from one science to another, always repeating in his heart: "Truth, Truth!"

But whatever might have been the attractions of the speculative life, he felt the need of money to push forward and increase his reputation, and for this end he worked as hard as possible. It even led him to enter for the prize of dramatic poetry, which he won. His friend, Vindicianus, — at the time

Proconsul — placed the crown upon his “disordered head” as he himself expresses it. The future Father of the Church writing for the theatre, — and what a theatre! — is not the least extraordinary thing in this life, so troubled and, at first sight, so contradictory.

It was also literary ambition that caused him to write about the same time — a book called “The Beautiful and the Fit” which he dedicated to the Syrian Hierius, “orator to the City of Rome” one of the official professors appointed by the Roman municipality or the Imperial treasury. This Levantine rhetorician had an immense success and Augustine admired him like everybody else. He does not say whether the celebrated Hierius even paid him a compliment about it, and rather gives one to understand that he had no other admirer than himself. The book had hardly any success. New disappointments and serious mortifications gradually changed his state of mind and plans for the future. He was obliged to acknowledge that after years of effort he had advanced but little. Indeed it was quite plain to everybody that the rhetorician Augustinus was not a success. Why? He may have lacked discipline, the most indispensable gift of the schoolmaster. As we have seen,

the rhetoric classes at Carthage were especially difficult to control, because they were more rowdy than elsewhere, and large and noisy classes he could not manage.

He was also beginning to doubt Manicheism, and spoke of it to the priests of the sect. They got out of the difficulty by evasion and the dazzling promise that when Faustus their great and learned bishop came to Carthage, he would refute all his objections and confirm him in the faith. The supposedly learned doctor turned out to be an ignorant man with no knowledge of science or philosophy, and whose intellectual attainments consisted of nothing more than a little grammar. Great was Augustine's disappointment; and this, added to his set-back in his profession, brought about a crisis of soul and conscience. He decided to try his fortune at Rome, where literary reputations were made. He wanted to get away, where he could breathe more freely and get courage for a fresh start. His friends, too, urged him to go and find a stage worthy of his talents at Rome. Alypius, who was finishing his law studies there, pressed him to come, and promised success. He at once made preparations to leave.

Augustine tells us that the chief motive which led

him to Rome was that the students there were said to be better disciplined and less noisy than those of Carthage.

He tried to leave without a painful parting with his mother; but she, suspecting his intentions, followed him to the port of sailing, holding him by force, imploring him with tears, that he either come back with her or take her with him. He pretended that he was only there to see a friend off, and could not leave him until the wind was favorable for sailing. She refused to return home without him, so he persuaded her to take shelter near the ship, in the little memorial dedicated to St. Cyprian, where she prayed and wept, until weariness overcame her and she slept. During the night the ship set sail, carrying Augustine with it, and his sorrow stricken parent was obliged to return to Thagaste without him.

The deception practiced upon her weighed heavily on his heart, for he knew what her anguish would be when she awakened in the morning and found him gone. His friends tried to cheer him up by picturing the honors that awaited him at Rome, but with little success. The thought of her great love and devotion being repaid by such deception as he had practiced upon her, scourged his heart as

with whips, and he neither slept nor responded to his friends efforts to lighten his remorse.

“ And what, O Lord, was she with so many tears asking of Thee but that I should not sail? But Thou, in the depths of Thy counsels, and hearing the main point of her desire, didst not then regard what she asked, that Thou mightest give her what she had ever asked. The wind blew and swelled our sails and withdrew the shore from our sight; and she was there, and on the morrow was near frantic with grief, and with complaints and groans filled Thy ears, who didst disregard them, and she knew not what great joy Thou wert about to work for her out of my absence. She knew not, therefore did she weep and wail, — and yet, after accusing my treachery and hard-heartedness, she betook herself again to intercede for me.”

Neither mother nor son knew where God was leading him. He who departed as a rhetorician, to “ sell words,” would return as an apostle to conquer souls.

THE GOLDEN CITY

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOLDEN CITY

Augustine fell ill just after he arrived at Rome. It seems that he reached the city towards the end of August or the beginning of September, before the students reassembled, at the time of heat and fevers, when all Romans who could leave the city, fled to the summer resorts on the coast.

The diseases of the whole world, brought by the continuous inflow of foreigners, flourished there. Accordingly the inhabitants had a panic fear of infection, and prudently withdrew from infected persons, leaving them to their unhappy fate. If, from a sense of shame, they sent a slave to the patient's bedside, he was ordered to the sweating-rooms, and there disinfected from head to heels, before he could re-enter the house.

Augustine must have been well looked after, since he recovered. He had gone to one of his Manichee friends, an "auditor" like himself; an excellent

man, with whom he dwelt all the time he was in Rome. Still, the attack of fever was so bad that he very nearly died. In after years he shuddered when he thought of the danger to body and soul. "Had my mother's heart been smitten by that wound, it never could have been healed," he says in his "Confessions." He ascribes his recovery to his mother's prayers, which obtained for him, without knowing it, the welfare of his body, whilst pleading for the welfare of his soul.

As soon as he was convalescent, he set out to find pupils, and was obliged to ask the favor of many an important personage and knock at many an inhospitable door. This unfortunate experience, right at the very beginning, did not make him very fond of Rome. The most annoying things united, as if on purpose, to disgust him still more. Autumn rains had started, and the mornings and evenings were cold, which was bad for his weak chest and African constitution. With his eyes still full of the warm light of his country, and the whiteness of the Carthaginian streets, he wandered as an exile between the gloomy Roman palaces, saddened by the grey walls and muddy pavements. The barren Campagna added to his homesickness as he compared its vast dreariness with the laughing suburbs

of Carthage with their gardens, villas, vineyards and olivets, everywhere encircled by the brilliance of the sea and the lagoons.

Rome, indeed, could not be a very delightful place to live in for a poor rhetoric master come there to better his fortune. To be always going up and down the flights of steps and the heights of the City of Seven Hills; to be rushing between the Aventine and Sallust's garden, and then to the Esquiline and Janiculum! To bruise his feet on the pointed cobbles of sloping alleyways! The walks were long, and there seemed to be no end to the city. When he went for a walk in Carthage, he merely sauntered. Here in Rome, the bustle of the crowds and the number of the equipages, disturbed and exasperated the indolent southerner with his lounging habits. Any moment there was risk of being run over by cars tearing along at full gallop through the narrow streets, as men of fashion just then had a craze for driving fast. Or, again, a foot passenger was obliged to step aside so that some lady might go by in her litter, escorted by her household, from the handicraft slaves and kitchen staff, to the house servants; all this army manoeuvring under the orders of a leader who held a rod in his hand, the sign of his office. When the street became clear

once more, and at last the palace of the influential personage was reached, there was no admittance without tipping the porter.

In order to be admitted to the master, it was necessary to have the good graces of the slave who took the name, and who not only introduced the suppliant, but who might with a word, recommend or injure him. Even then one was not sure of the good-will of the patron. Some of these great lords, who were not always sprung from the old Roman families, prided themselves upon their uncompromising nationality, and made a point of treating foreigners with much haughtiness—especially Africans. Without doubt Augustine must have had many unpleasant experiences.

Through the long streets, so brilliantly illuminated at night that the lighting almost equalled daylight, he would wearily return to the dwelling of his host, the Manichee. This house, according to an old tradition, was in the Velabrum quarter; a poor quarter where crowded a filthy mass of Orientals, and where immigrants from the Levantine countries and Egypt, lodged. The warehouses of the Tiber were not far off, and no doubt there were laborers, porters and watermen living in the neighborhood.

What a place for him who had been the guest of the magnificent Romanianus, and the intimate of the Proconsul at Carthage! When he had climbed the six flights of stairs to his lodging, and had crouched shivering over the ill-burning hearth, in the meagre light of a small bronze or earthenware lamp, while the raw dampness sweated through the walls, he felt more and more his poverty and loneliness. He hated Rome and the stupid ambition that had lured him there.

And yet Rome should have made a strong appeal to this cultured man, this aesthete, so alive to beauty. Although the transfer of the Court to Milan had drawn away some of the gayety and glitter, it had never been more beautiful. Modern Rome has nothing to show that at all approaches it. Dominating the Roman Forum and the Fora of various emperors, labyrinths of temples, basilicas, porticoes and libraries — the Capitol and the Palatine rose up like two marble mountains carved and sculptured, under their heaped-up palaces and sanctuaries. In all these buildings rooted in the soil, suspended and towering from the flanks of the hills; in these interminable regiments of columns and pilasters: in this profusion of precious marbles, metals, mosaics, statues and obelisks — there was

something enormous; a lack of restraint which disturbed the taste and prostrated the imagination. Above all, the excessive use of gold and gilding astonished visitors. Originally indigent, Rome became noted for its greed for gold. When the gold of conquered nations came into its hands, it spread it over everything, with the indiscreet display of the upstart. When Nero built the Golden House he realised its dream. The Capitol had golden doors. Statues, bronzes, the roofs of temples were all gilded. All this gold, spread upon the surfaces and angles of the architecture, dazzled and tired the eyes.

A Carthage rhetorician like Augustine, could only feel for it an irritated admiration.

The vices of the Roman people with whom he lived, galled him. The gluttony and drunkenness disgusted him. They seemed to think only of eating and drinking and lewdness.

The aristocracy did not manifest tastes much superior. Except a few cultivated minds, sincerely fond of literature, the greatest number only saw in the literary pose an easy way to being fashionable. They who "hated study like poison" spoke only of their favorite author; the others did not exist for them. As a matter of fact, music had ousted litera-

ture: the libraries were closed like sepulchres. But fashionable people were interested in a hydraulic organ, and ordered from the lute-makers "lyres the size of chariots." Above all they were interested in sports: to arrange races, to raise horses, to train athletes and gladiators, were the popular undertakings.

Immense fortunes which had gathered in the hands of certain people, either through inheritance or swindling, enabled them to keep up a senseless expenditure. Like our own millionaires of to-day, who have houses and estates in both hemispheres, the great Roman lords possessed them in every country of the Empire. And yet, in spite of their wealth and all the privileges they enjoyed, these rich people were neither happy nor at ease. At the least sign of despotic power, their lives and property were threatened. Accusations of magic, of disrespect to the Emperor, of plots against the Caesar, — any pretext was good enough to plunder them. A system of espionage was fostered. Accusation by detectives was always in the air. Living in this atmosphere of mistrust, hypocrisy, bribery and cruelty — it is small wonder that the Carthaginian professor fell into bitter reflections upon Roman corruption.

But, above all, Augustine was homesick. The Golden City could not make him forget the soft twilights upon the Lake of Tunis, the enchantment of moonlit nights upon the Gulf of Carthage, and the astonishing landscape to be seen from the terraced heights of Byrsa.

ROMAN EXPERIENCES

CHAPTER IX

ROMAN EXPERIENCES

With the help of his friend Alypius enough pupils were found at last, and Augustine opened his "word-shop," in his own rooms. He could make sufficient to live on himself, but not enough to support the woman and child left behind at Carthage.

In addition to his other difficulties, his disillusionment in regard to Manicheism grew day by day, making him more and more disgusted with its pretensions and hypocrisies.

Personal reasons, however, obliged him not to break with his fellow-religionists who had supported and nursed him on his arrival at Rome, and who might do him still greater services. Therefore, through instinctive prudence he prolonged his indecision. As a result, he, who formerly flung himself so enthusiastically into the pursuit of Truth, glided little by little, into scepticism — the scepticism of the Academicians in its usual form.

At the same time that he lost his taste for speculative thinking, new annoyances put the finishing touches to his discouragement. If the Roman students were less noisy than those of Carthage, they had the disastrous habit of leaving without paying for their tuition.

Unfortunately, too, Alypius was so occupied with his duties as Assessor to the Treasurer-General, that he had little time to devote to his harassed friend — however glad he would have been to be with him. Thus, as both were busy, — although their friendship became still stronger during this stay in Rome — they saw very little of each other. Their pleasures, also, were not the same. Alypius had a passion for the Amphitheatre, a passion which Augustine disapproved. At Carthage, he had influenced his friend to discontinue attendance at the circus; but hardly had Alypius arrived at Rome than he became mad about the gladiatorial contests. Some of his friends, against his will, had dragged him to the arena. He said he would stay, since he must, but he bet that he would keep his eyes closed all through the fight, and that nothing could make him open them. He sat down with his captors, shut his eyes and determinedly refused to look, despite their tantalizing efforts to make him do so. Sud-

denly there was a great roar of shouting, the shout of the crowd hailing the fall of the first wounded. His eyelids flew open of themselves, and he saw the flow of blood. "At the sight of the blood" writes Augustine, "he drank in ruthlessness; no longer did he turn away, but fixed his gaze, and he became mad — he knew no more. . . . He was fascinated by the criminal atrocity of the battle, and drunk with the pleasure of blood."

These breathless phrases of the "Confessions" seem to throb still with the frenzy of the crowd. The roars of the spectators were deafening.

Certainly, it was not a wholesome sight for the future Christian bishop! Yet, to have known this blood-drunkenness at first hand, will but make him all the more ashamed when he falls at the feet of the God of Mercy. Later, it would prove useful to have had personal knowledge of the harshness of men's justice; and in the fulfillment of his duties as judge, to observe its errors and its flaws. Augustine, who relates these things, draws this moral from them, that, for a man going to be a bishop and, as such, administrator and judge, this time spent in the government service was a good preparatory school. Most of the other great leaders of this generation of Christians, had also been officials before

ordination, and had been mixed up in business and politics, freely living the life of their times. As with Alypius, so it had been with St. Ambrose, St. Paulinus of Nola, with Augustine himself, and with Evodius.

It may be truly said that the experience of Augustine as a Manichee, was but the preparation for his future apostolate against that heresy; as, having had personal knowledge of its weakness and wickedness, its pretensions and hypocrisy, he was better able to attack and defeat it.

However absorbed in their work the two Carthaginians might be, it is certain that intellectual questions took the lead of all others. This, at least, is manifest in Augustine's case, and he must have astonished Alypius when he informed him that he had lost his faith in Manicheism; setting forth his doubts about their teachings regarding cosmogony and physical science, and his suspicions touching the hidden immorality of the sect. The controversies which were their strong point, dazzled him no longer.

At Carthage, recently, he had heard a Catholic named Helfidius, oppose them by arguments from Scripture which they were unable to refute. Added to all this the Manichee Bishop of Rome had made

a bad impression on Augustine from the beginning, being a man of rough appearance and manners, without any culture.

From thence on, his keen dialectical and satirical spirit was freely exercised to the discomforture of his Manichean acquaintances.

It was at the crisis of his disillusionment, that an unforeseen chance of bettering his fortunes happened. The city of Milan offered a professorship of rhetoric to public competition. It would mean salvation to him if he could get appointed! He had long desired a post in State education, as it would mean a fixed salary, which would free him from the worry and humiliation of drumming up pupils, and guard him from their dishonesty. He immediately enrolled himself as a candidate. But, as in our own times, simple merit was not enough. It was necessary to pull wires, and his Manichean friends did this for him. They recommended him to the Prefect Symmachus, who presided at the competition. To the irony of fate, Augustine owed his new position to the people from whom he was preparing to separate, and would soon attack, and to a man who, in a way, was the official enemy of Christianity. The Manichees, very likely, had represented their candidate as a man hostile to the Catholics. As

Symmachus had just begun an open struggle with the latter, he thought he had done wisely in selecting Augustine.

Thus did a chain of events — with which his will had little to do — draw the young rhetorician to Milan and to where he did not want to go: to the place on the rule beside his mother; to the place where her prayers unceasingly summoned him. “Where I am, there shall you be also.” Little did he expect this when he left Rome. His chief thought was that he had at last won an independent financial position, and that he had become an official of some importance. He had flattering evidence of this at once. It was at the expense of the city of Milan, and in the Imperial carriages that he travelled through Italy to take up his new post.

AMBROSE THE BISHOP

CHAPTER X

AMBROSE THE BISHOP

The newly appointed University professor travelled from Rome to Milan along the Flamminian Way. Arrived at his destination, he found that city inferior to the immense magnitude and monumental grandeur of Rome; but still a great metropolis, with fine though modern public buildings, and numerous palaces; its squares and parks crowded with soldiers, courtiers, citizens; in short with all the busy and the idle population of a great capital; for Milan was the seat of the court and government of the thirteen years old Valentinian. It was also the seat of the great statesman-bishop, Ambrose.

During his long journey, Augustine must have frequently thought of the verses of Terrence quoted by his friend Marcianus, the night he sailed for Italy:

“This day which brings thee to another life
Demands that thou another man shalt be.”

He was thirty years old. The time of youthful wildness and willfulness was over. Age, disappointments, the difficulties of life, had developed his character. He was now a man of position, an eminent official in a great city which was the second capital of the Western Empire. If he wished to avoid further set-backs, a line of conduct must be carefully planned for future action.

First of all, it was time to renounce Manicheism. A Manichee would have caused scandal in a city where the majority of the population were Christian, and the Court Catholic — although openly sympathetic with Arianism. For a long time Augustine had ceased being a Manichee, at heart. Therefore he was not obliged to feign, in order to re-enter a church which already included him among its catechumens. He was certainly a lukewarm catechumen, since at times he inclined to scepticism. However, he decided that it was decent to remain, at least for the time being, in the Catholic body, in which his mother had brought him up, until some sure light arose to direct his course.

It is a curious illustration of his subjective character of mind, that his "Confessions" give us nothing of his nine years at Carthage, but notices of

students and Manichees; and of his six months residence at Rome, he presents us again with nothing but Manichees and students. It is equally curious to see how, when he arrives at Milan, Ambrose at once fills the whole of his recollection: "To Milan I came, to Ambrose the Bishop," he writes with finality.

Ambrose was an undoubted political power, an important personage, a celebrated orator, the lustre of whose renown was spread all over the Roman world. He belonged to an illustrious family, his father having been Praetorian-prefect of Gaul. He himself, with the title of Consul, was governing the provinces of Emilia and Liguria, when the Milanese forced him, much against his will, to become their bishop. Baptised, ordained priest, and consecrated bishop, one event following the other in quick succession, it was only apparently that he gave up his civil functions. From the height of his episcopal throne he always personified the highest authority in the country.

As soon as he arrived at Milan, Augustine hastened to call upon the Bishop. Knowing him as we do, he must have approached Ambrose in a transport of enthusiasm, his imagination all on fire. It was a man of letters, an orator, a famous writer,

almost a fellow-worker, that he was going to see. He looked forward to finding himself on an equal footing with this high personage, and to having familiar talks with him, as with the Proconsul Vindicianus at Carthage. He told himself also that Ambrose was a priest, a doctor of souls: he meant to open his soul to him, to show him all his spiritual wretchedness, the anguish of his mind and heart, — expectant of consolation, if not of cure.

But, though Ambrose received him courteously, he kept in mind the fact that this stranger was an appointee of Symmachus his enemy and — a Manichean; therefore, he must be circumspect in dealing with him. Augustine tells us that during his stay at Milan, he was unable to have a private confidential talk with the Bishop, because of the many claims upon his attention and charity. “I could not confer with him upon what I had in mind, in the manner that I desired, by reason of the many businesses of others, whose infirmities he served, which kept me from speech with him. And the time he was not with them — which was but little — was either taken up with the necessary refection of his body by its daily food, or of his soul by reading. . . . Often when I have been there (for no one was refused admittance, nor was it customary

to give him notice of anyone's coming) I have seen him reading in silence, and never otherwise; and after a long, silent waiting (for who could have the heart to be troublesome to one so intent?) I have gone away; thinking that for the short time he had for the repairing of his mind, free from other men's business, he was loth to be taken from what he was about." So Augustine went away with his heart full of disappointment, rather than disturb him he so longed to converse with. We can easily imagine the wounded vanity of the famous rhetorician at being thus ignored.

It may well have been that the great Bishop was not so deeply absorbed in reading as Augustine thought. He may have been perfectly cognizant of the presence of the brilliant University professor, about whom the city was talking, but deemed it prudent not to enter into any argument with him, the dialectical skill of the learned Manichee being well known. But Ambrose had a better method of reaching this soul than that of private argument: pulpit exegesis.

Sunday after Sunday found the famous rhetorician an attentive listener to the sermons of the greatest preacher of the time. He went to Mass regularly for no other purpose, although greatly

attracted also by the music. At first he went in order to study the methods of the great orator, to judge the quality of the eloquence so widely lauded. After a while the clear exposition of doctrine and logical arguments in their favor, gradually caught his attention, awakening his interest and eliciting an admiration greater than the oratorical gifts of the speaker were able to evoke. "I was delighted with the elegance of his discourse, which was more learned than that of Faustus, yet not so pleasing and winning as to manner of delivery. But as to matter, there was no comparison; for the one wandered out of the way through the deceitful paths of Manicheism; the other taught the sound doctrine of salvation. But 'salvation is far from sinners' such as I then stood before him; and yet I was insensibly drawn towards him, and I knew it not."

The impression made upon Ambrose by the famous African, could not have been very favorable, as Augustine's character must have seemed volatile and frivolous to the practical Roman, the high official, used all his life to decisive action. He certainly knew nothing of the spiritual desolation just then wasting the soul of the noted rhetorician, and could have had no inkling of the interior battle he was waging.

In after years Augustine realized this, and felt thoroughly convinced that, if Ambrose withdrew himself, it was because the professor of rhetoric, at the time, lacked the necessary humility of heart and intellect for profitable discussion. Yet, while admitting this, he regretfully adds: "If anyone could have been found to trouble himself about instructing me, he would have found a most willing and docile pupil."

At this time of spiritual trial and vacillation, a deciding influence appeared upon the scene in the person of Monica; who had dared the perils of land and sea to be with this prodigal son of hers, whom she loved "far more than most mothers" he writes.

MONICA'S INFLUENCE

CHAPTER XI

MONICA'S INFLUENCE

When Monica arrived at Milan she found Augustine at the head of a most unique household. With him were his son Adeodatus and the boy's mother, whom he had brought to Milan as speedily as his fortunes permitted; Alypius, "the brother of his heart," who had followed him from Rome, not being able to keep separated from him; Nebridius, his other admirer, who had left a palatial home, an assured position in Carthage, and an adoring mother, to be with this charming and congenial Augustine whose conversation so captivated him; Romanianus, too, was there, having come to Milan on some law business. Besides these there were Navigius, his brother, and two cousins: Rusticus and Lastidianus. A whole crowd of relatives had come down upon him, taking advantage of his hospitality, which was quite in keeping with the customs of the times. The Rhetorician of the City of Milan

had a post which would appear superb in the eyes of his poor relations. He was acquainted with very important people, had access to the Imperial Court, whence favors and bounties came. Immediately the members of the family hastened to put themselves under his protection and be enrolled as beneficiaries, to get all they could out of his new fortune and credit.

We may be sure that Alypius, Nebridius and Romanianus were paying guests, which enabled him to extend free-hearted hospitality to these self-seeking members of his family. And now, his mother came to live with him.

The residence in which they dwelt belonged to a rich Milanese, who gave it over gratuitously to the tenancy of the popular and attractive University professor. It was a fine, large mansion in the suburbs, with a delightful garden, where the discursive friends met daily to philosophise over things in general, but over Truth in particular.

Friendship ever consoled Augustine for hopeless thoughts, and in the philosopher's corner, shaded by palm trees and hedged about with closely clipped box, in the little company of his friends, the tired professor found consolation and rest after the labors of the day.

When Monica appeared upon the scene, she quickly assumed charge of the *menage* and, being an excellent housekeeper, no doubt added much to the material comfort of the little community.

At the earliest possible moment after her arrival, Monica called upon the Bishop to whom she opened her heart, begging him to interest himself in her son. But, while greatly admiring the model mother, and no doubt sympathising with her most sincerely, he yet made no advances to the son, beyond congratulating him warmly upon having such a mother.

There can be no doubt, but that the wise Bishop assured her he was serving her purpose much better by his sermons than by entering into discussion with his learned listener from the University. Like the other bishop whom she had tearfully besought to interest himself in her son, Ambrose counselled patience and prayer, comforting her with the assurance of their reward.

When Augustine informed his mother that he was no longer a Manichee, nor yet a Catholic Christian, she listened without undue elation of spirit, as to something quietly expected. "Her heart was not moved by any turbulent transport of joy, when she heard that what she had daily begged with her tears,

was now so far brought about, that though I was not arrived at truth, yet I was delivered from error. But rather as being assured that in due time Thou wouldst give the rest, Who had promised her the whole, she calmly answered with a heart full of confidence, that she trusted in Christ that before she died, she should see me a faithful Catholic.

“Then, redoubling her prayers and tears that God would enlighten my darkness, she ran more zealously to the church, and was ever intent upon the words of Ambrose . . . for she loved that man as an angel of God, because she knew that by his means I had been brought to that doubtful wavering in which I then was; and she confidently expected that my disease being now brought to the crisis, as the physicians call it, I should pass from sickness to perfect health.”

Monica, clearly perceiving the one great obstacle in the way of Augustine's complete conversion, set about removing it. She knew that baptism could not be administered to one living in a state of concubinage; therefore it was necessary that this union be broken up. She must have been very tactful and most persuasive, to have succeeded in her task. The young woman gave up the man she loved, without recrimination or protest; being convinced that

it would be disastrous to his best interests, were the relationship continued.

She must have had a noble soul as well as a loving heart, to have consented to separate from him to whom she had been so faithful, in order that he might make a Christian marriage, and lead a Christian life. She not only gave up Augustine, but also her charming son, Adeodatus, — a still greater sacrifice for her mother's heart — and went her lonely way to Carthage, where she spent the rest of her life in doing penance. In his "Confessions" Augustine acknowledges that the parting caused him much sorrow.

IN THE DEPTHS

CHAPTER XII

IN THE DEPTHS

Monica, still ambitious for Augustine's success, had sought and found a rich young wife for him; but, as the girl was too young for the wedding to take place before two years had passed, he determined to devote the interval to a more intensive study of Truth. He tells us that a translation of Plato's Dialogues, which fell into his hands at this time, helped him greatly. But, though his intelligence and poetic imagination were attracted by the glamor of Platonism, it left his heart unsatisfied.

It was St. Paul that showed him the way to entire happiness. He began to read the Epistles carefully; and the more he read them, the more he became aware of the abyss which separates philosophy from wisdom. The Apostle taught that it was not enough to get a glimpse of God through the crystal of concepts, but it was necessary to be united with Him in spirit and in truth — to possess and enjoy

Him. Only the contrite and humble of heart shall see God. Augustine readily grasped the thought.

But his old life was strong within him; it chained him to itself by bonds that he loved. He reviewed all that he must give up: gaming, elaborate entertainments, music, song, perfumes, books, poetry, flowers, the coolness of forests in which he had hunted with Romanianus; all that he had ever cared about, "even to that freshness of the light, so kind to human eyes."

In this battle between temptation and the dictates of conscience, he was not able to decide and he became desperate. On the one hand he was goaded by the urgings of the Divine call, on the other he was trammelled by the pleasures that so enchanted him. His will, enfeebled by sin, was unable to struggle against itself. And so he continued to endure life and to be "devoured by time."

However, the course of events was working on the side of God.

The Empire, at that time, became a scandalous spectacle for an honest-minded and high-souled man like Augustine. At Milan, where he was connected with the Court, he was in a position to see the baseness and ferocity that may spring from avarice and ambition. Was he going to continue mingling

with this lot of swindlers, assassins and brute beasts? He also became ill. The fogs of the northern city seriously affected his weak chest and throat, those becoming worse and worse. Besides, his success as a rhetorician was also becoming weakened. The Milanese turned his African accent into ridicule. He even found among them certain purists who discovered solecisms in his phrases! His reputation as a professor was on the wane, because rhetoric had lost its old attractiveness while his soul was being torn by its spiritual warfare. Dark forebodings oppressed him. A great wave of darkness and sadness swept over him, overwhelming him in depths of despair.

At this time of despondency his only comfort was the sacred music of the Church, which Ambrose had brought to much perfection; and which soothed and assuaged his anguish, causing him to shed copious tears, melting his heart within him. "How I have wept, O my God, over the hymns and canticles when the sweet sound of the music of Thy Church thrilled my soul! As the music flowed into my ears, and the Truth trickled into my heart, the tide of devotion swelled high within me, and the tears ran down, and there was gladness in those tears."

What he needed and longed for was a guide whom

he might trust implicitly; to whom he could open his heart and lay bare his soul. Gladly would he have gone to Ambrose and poured out his spiritual distress, and have taken him for a guide — but Ambrose remained unapproachable, and seemingly uninterested in the son of Monica.

An end must be put to it somehow. He must find someone who would force him out of his indecision. Suddenly, led by a mysterious will which he felt to have risen within him, he went to consult the old priest who had instructed Ambrose, in his young days, and to him he poured out his anguish. Simplicianus listened attentively and sympathetically to the relation, recognising the marks of God's designs on this gifted soul, but saying little, until Augustine mentioned his Platonic studies. Then, skillfully perceiving that vanity was not yet dead in Augustine, Simplicianus offered him as an example, the very translator of those Platonic books which he had read with so much enthusiasm, — that famous Victorinus Afer, the orator so learned and admired, whose statue was in the Roman Forum. Victorinus had been convinced of the claims of Christianity, but — because of philosophical pride and the fear of offending his pagan friends among the Roman aristocracy — deferred professing his

belief. In vain, Simplicianus had pointed out to him how illogical his conduct was when, suddenly and unexpectedly he decided. When the day of baptism of catechumens arrived, this celebrated man mounted the platform set up in the basilica for the profession of faith, and then, like the poorest of the faithful, delivered his profession before the assembled people. The crowd, jubilant over this brave performance, cheered the neophyte by exclaiming: "Victorinus! Victorinus!"

Augustine was stirred by the little story, whose details had been so happily chosen, — because so resembling his own — to act upon an imagination like his. It made a deep and lasting impression. He looked upon it as a providential sign, a lesson in courage which concerned him personally. Some days after this visit to Simplicianus, a fellow countryman named Pontitianus, who held a high position in the Imperial Court, came to see him. Augustine and Alypius happened to be alone in the house. They sat down to talk, and by chance the visitor noticed the Epistles of St. Paul lying on a billiard table. Pontitianus, who was a Catholic, expressed pleased surprise, and spoke warmly of the ascetic life, and especially of the wonders of holiness wrought by St. Anthony and his com-

panions in the Egyptian desert, of whom Augustine had never heard, although at Rome this subject had been much discussed. In Catholic circles, it had been the main topic of conversation. People spoke of little else than the Egyptian solitaries, and of the number, growing larger and larger, of those who stripped themselves of all their possessions to live in utter poverty. What was the use of keeping worldly goods, that the avarice of Government taxation confiscated so easily, and that the Barbarians constantly coveted from afar! The brutes who came down from the North would get hold of them sooner or later. And even supposing one might save them, was the life of the time worth the trouble of living? The fate of the Empire trembled in the balance. The hour of great desolation was at hand. . . .

Pontitianus, observing the effect of his words upon his hearers, was led to tell them a private adventure of his own. He was at Treves, in attendance at the Court. One afternoon, while the Emperor was at the circus, he and three of his friends went for a stroll beyond the city walls. Two of them parted from the others and went off into the country, and there came upon a hut where certain hermits dwelt. They went in, and found a book —

the Life of St. Anthony. They read it and were so wondrously impressed, that the two courtiers instantaneously resolved to join the solitaries, and never went back to the palace, although they were betrothed! When the young ladies, to whom they were affianced, heard of their resolve, they, too, decided to give up the world and consecrate themselves to God.

As Pontitianus recalled this conscience-drama, his tone betrayed an emotion that gradually affected Augustine, who felt that every word applied to himself. In his "Confessions" he describes the way this story suddenly made him see himself as he really was.

"Such was the story of Pontitianus; but Thou, O Lord, whilst he was speaking, didst turn me round towards myself, taking me from behind my back, where I had placed myself, unwilling to look at me, and set me before my face, that I might see how foul I was, how crooked and defiled, how bespotted and ulcerous. And I beheld and stood aghast; and whither to flee from myself, I found not. And if I sought to turn mine eyes off from myself, he went on with his relation, and then again didst Thou thrust me before my eyes that 'I might find out mine iniquity and hate it.' I had known it, but

made as though I saw it not, winked at it and forgot it . . . I was gnawed within, and exceedingly confounded with an horrible shame, while Pontitianus was speaking. And he, having brought his tale to a close, and the business he came for, went his way and I into myself.

“What said I not against myself, with what scourges of condemnation lashed I not my soul, that it might follow me, striving to go after Thee. Yet, it drew back; refused, but excused itself. . . . And she feared as she would death, to be restrained from the flux of that custom by which she was wasting to death.”

Then he turned upon Alypius impetuously, and seizing him by the arm exclaimed: “What ails us? What is it? What heardest thou? The unlearned start up and take Heaven by force; and we, with all our learning, wallow in flesh and blood.”

Alypius stared at him, stupefied. “The truth is,” adds Augustine, “that I scarcely knew what I said. My face, my eyes, my color, and the change in my voice expressed my meaning much better than my words.” What he felt at the moment was the need of solitude where he could weep freely. He left the house and went down into a secluded corner of the garden, where he gave vent to his over-

charged feelings. Alypius, being uneasy about him, followed him at a distance, and then approached and sat down beside him on the seat where he had paused. Augustine did not even notice that he was there. . . . Suddenly he sprang up, as if a gust of the tempest had struck him. He rushed to the end of the garden, and fell upon his knees under a fig tree, and with his forehead pressing the earth, burst into tears.

At this moment of agony, he heard a childish voice repeating, "Tolle lege, tolle lege," (Take and read, take and read!) Augustine shuddered. What was this refrain? He had never heard it before. . . . Immediately, as if divinely commanded, he hastened back to where Alypius was sitting, for lying there he had left the Epistles of St. Paul. He snatched up the book and opened it at random, and the first passage his eyes rested on was this: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh and its concupiscences." He read no further "for instantly, at the end of the sentence, as if a light of confidence and serenity had streamed into my heart, all the darkness of former hesitation was dispelled. Putting a mark in the place, I shut the book, and with a countenance that was now calm and serene, related all to

Alypius. He asked to see what I had read. I showed him the place; he read further than I had read, who knew not what followed; and the next words were, 'him that is weak in the faith take unto you' which he applied to himself, as he told me. By this admonition he was strengthened, and without any disturbance of mind or hesitation, joined himself to me in this good determination and resolution."

They hastened into the house to tell Monica of their resolve, which caused her to make exultant thanksgiving to God "who is able to do above what we ask or understand. For she now saw so much more granted her by Thee in my regard, than she had been wont to ask with all those lamenting tears. . . . Thou hadst turned her mourning into a much more plentiful joy." Monica had implored only the ordinary Christian virtues for this errant son of hers, who now informed her that henceforth the honors and joys of the world would be as nothing to him; that until life ended, he would devote himself to God against whom he had sinned so woefully. Monica could now sing her *Nunc Dimittis* in peace, for her greatest work was done. Her mission was ended.

THE RETREAT AT CASSIACUM

CHAPTER XIII

THE RETREAT AT CASSIACUM

Augustine, having determined to give up his professorship at the University, decided to do so quietly in order to avoid the public excitement that would ensue, if he made known the cause of his resignation. Vacation time was but twenty days ahead. He would continue his duties until then. As his health was becoming worse, he would have a good excuse for giving up his post. Chronic bronchitis, which the cold dampness of the climate had induced, made breathing difficult. He became so hoarse that he came to think that his lungs were affected. His health really demanded care, which was a sufficient reason to interrupt his lectures. Having fulfilled his professional duties to the end — and he assures us it took some courage — he left the professorial chair with the declared intention of never occupying it again.

He is now free from all earthly ties and can pre-

pare for baptism in silence and retreat. But he must make a living somehow for himself and those dependent on him: his son, his mother, his brother, his cousins. A heavy burden which he had been struggling under for some time. Faithful Romanianus again came to his assistance, by asking him to keep on giving lessons to his son. A young man named Trigetius, begged the same favor. Therefore Augustine did not give up his employment altogether. For the present, at least, he had but changed from a Government professor into a private one. All he wanted now was a habitation. The grammarian, Verecundus, a friend and colleague, graciously offered him a country house of his, just outside Milan at Cassiacum. He suggested that Augustine spend his vacation there, and even to live there permanently with all his people, on condition that he look after the property and keep it up. In those days, friendship knew nothing of our narrow and shabby egoisms. One cannot admire too much the generosity and kindness of those ancient Christian manners.

Cassiacum has disappeared, but the imagination is free to rebuild it fancifully in any part of the rich country which lies about Milan. The poetical Licentius recalls to Augustine, "Departed suns

among Italian Mountain heights," therefore it is likely that the estate of Verecundus lay among those first mountain slopes which roll into the Brianza range. To-day the rich Milanese have their country houses among those hills.

The country is wonderfully fertile and cultivated. Innumerable clustering fruit trees make it one vast orchard through which deep streams wind, slow-flowing and stocked with fish. Everywhere is the sound of running water, — inconceivably refreshing music for African ears. The scent of mint and aniseed is in the air; and fields of rich grass growing high and straight, in which you can plunge up to the knees. Here and there are deep valleys with green thickets, slashed with the rose plumes of lime trees and the burnished leaves of the hazel; and where northern firs lift their black needles. Far off, blended in a violet mass, rise the Alps, peak upon peak, covered with snow; in the middle distance are sheer cliffs, jutting fastnesses, ploughed through with black gorges which throw into high light the bronze-gold of their slopes. Not far off, the enchanted lakes slumber. Tinted mists hover over their waters, writhing above the crags which imprison them until they drift athwart a sky sometimes a little chill — Leonardo's pensive sky of

shadowy amethyst — and again of a flushed blue, where float great clouds, silken and ruddy, as in the backgrounds of Veronese's pictures. The beauty of light enlivens and beautifies the over-heavy opulence of the land.

Wherever the country house of Verecundus may be placed, some bit of this triumphal landscape will be found. As for the house itself, Augustine has said enough about it for us to see it fairly well. It was no doubt one of those old rustic buildings, inhabited for a few months of the year, in the warmest season, and for the rest of the time given over to the frolics of mice and rats.

Without any pretence to architectural form, it had been enlarged and renovated simply for the greater convenience of those who lived there. The sole luxury of this country house was the bath-houses, which were simple and yet reminded Augustine of the decorated gymnasiums. Very likely the entire interior was painted in fresco from top to bottom, as was the custom of the time. The surroundings must have been kitchen-garden, grazing land, or ploughed fields, as in a farm. A meadow lay before the dwelling, which was protected from sun and wind by clumps of chestnut trees. There, stretched on the grass, under the shade of those

spreading trees, they chatted gayly, while listening to the gurgling of the brook, as it flowed under the windows of the bath-houses. They lived very near nature, almost the life of tillers of the soil. The whole charm of Cassiacum consisted in its quietude, its peace, and, above all, its fresh air. Augustine's tired lungs breathed there a purer air than in Milan, where the humid summer heat is crushing. His soul, yearning for retirement, found here a retreat in harmony with his new desires, a country solitude of which the Virgilian grace still appealed to his literary imagination. The days passed there were full of blessedness for him. Long afterwards he was deeply moved when he recalled them and in an outburst of gratitude towards his host, he prayed God to pay his debt. "Thou wilt recompense him, O Lord, on the day of the resurrection of the just. . . . For the country house at Cassiacum where we found shelter from the burning summer of our time, Thou wilt repay to Verecundus the coolness and evergreen shade of Thy paradise."

That was an unequalled moment in Augustine's life. Following immediately upon the mental crisis which had even worn out his body, he seems to have experienced the pleasure of convalescence. He relaxes and rests. His excitement is quenched, but

faith remains more luminous than ever. With a calm and supremely lucid mind he judges his condition; he sees clearly all that he still has to do ere he becomes a thorough Christian. First, he must become familiar with Holy Scripture and solve certain urgent questions — that of the soul, for example, its nature and origin — which then possessed him. Next, he must change his conduct, alter his ways of thought, and, so to speak, disinfect his mind still infected with pagan influences. Not an easy task, and one that would take some time to accomplish.

After nearly twenty centuries of Christianity, and in spite of our claim to understand all things, we do not yet realise very well what an abyss lies between us and paganism. When by chance we come upon pagan traces in certain primitive regions in the south of Europe, we became perplexed, and attribute to Catholicism what is but a survival of old abolished customs, so far removed from us that we do not recognize them. Augustine, on the contrary, was close to them. When he strolled in the fields and through the woods around Cassiacum, the fauns and woodland nymphs of Mythology haunted his memory; and all but stood before his eyes. He could not take a walk without coming

upon one of their chapels, or striking against a boundary-mark still greasy from the oil with which superstitious peasants had drenched it. Like himself, the old pagan land had not yet put on the Christ of the new era. He was like that Hermes Criophorus, who had awkwardly symbolized our Saviour on the walls of the catacombs. Even as the Bearer of Rams changed little by little into the Good Shepherd, the Bishop of Hippo emerged slowly from Augustine the Rhetorician.

He became aware of it during that languid Autumn at Cassiacum — that autumn heavy with all the rotting of summer, but which promised the coming of the great winter peace. The yellow leaves of the chestnuts were heaped by the roadside. They fell into the brook, and the smothered water ceased to sing. Augustine strained his ears trying to hear its music. His soul was also choked up with all the refuse of the passions. But he knew that soon the chant of his new life would begin in triumphal fashion, and he repeated over and over again the words of the psalm: *Cantate mihi canticum novum* — “Sing me a new song.”

Unfortunately for him the care of his salvation was not his only one at Cassiacum; he had a thousand others. So shall it be with him throughout

life. Till the very end he will long for solitude, to be alone with God, and to the end God will charge him with the care of others. His great spirit shall live above all by charity.

At the house of Verecundus he was not only the head, but he had a complete country estate to direct and supervise. Without doubt all his guests helped him by dividing duties: Alypius, who was used to business and versed in the twisted ways of the law, took over the buying and selling, and probably the accounts also. He was continually on the road to Milan. Augustine attended to the correspondence, and every morning appointed their work to the farm-laborers. Monica looked after the household affairs, not an easy task when nine sat down to meals every day. But she fulfilled her humble duties with touching kindness and entire self-forgetfulness. "She took care of us" writes Augustine, "as if we all were her children, and she served us as if each of us had been her father."

Let us take a glance at these "children" of Monica. Besides Alypius, whom we know already, there was the boy Adeodatus, "My son Adeodatus, whose gifts give promise of great things, unless my love for him, deceives me" writes his father. This

child was a prodigy. "His intelligence fills me with awe" says his father again. What is certain is that he had a soul like an angel. Some sayings of his have been preserved by Augustine. They are as fragrant as a bunch of lilies.

The other members of the family are more earthly minded. Navigius, Augustine's brother, an excellent man of whom we know nothing except that he had a bad liver, and, because of that, abstained from sweetmeats. Rusticus and Lastidianus, the cousins, persons as shadowy as the supers in a tragedy. Finally, Augustine's pupils, Trigetius and Licentius. The first, who had served some time in the army, was passionately fond of history. Although his master, in some of his Dialogues, has made him his interlocutor, his character remains vague. Not so Licentius. This son of Romanianus, the Maecenas of Thagaste, was Augustine's beloved pupil. It is easy to see that. All the phrases he devotes to Licentius have a warmth of tone, a color and relief that thrill.

This Licentius appears before us as the type of spoiled child, the son of a wealthy family, capricious, vain, presuming, unabashed, never missing a chance to have a joke with his master. Besides being forgetful, he is prone to sudden fancies, su-

perfidious and rather blundering. Notwithstanding, he is the best boy in the world, — a bad head, but a good heart. He was a frank pagan all his life, despite the remonstrances of Augustine, and those of gentle Paulinus of Nola, who lectured him in prose and verse. A lover of good things to eat and drink, he found himself obliged to do penance at Monica's frugal table. But, when the fever of inspiration took hold of him, he forgot eating and drinking, and in his poetical thirst — his master says — would have drained all the fountains of Helicon, for Licentius had a passion for versifying: "He is an almost perfect poet" wrote Augustine to Romanianus. At Cassiacum, under his tutor's indulgent eyes, he turned into verse the romantic adventure of Pyramus and Thisbe. He declaimed bits of it to the members of the household, for he had a fine loud voice. Then he flung aside the unfinished poem and suddenly fell in love with Greek tragedies, of which he knew nothing at all, though this did not prevent him from boring everybody he met with them. Another day it was the church music, then quite new, which flung him into enthusiasm. That day Licentius was heard singing canticles from morning to night.

On one occasion, as Augustine was discussing the

order established by divine Providence, he made it a pretext for giving a little edifying lecture to his pupil. Having heard the sermon to the end, the sharp Licentius slyly remarked: "O say, what a splendid arrangement of events to show me that nothing happens except in the best way, and for our greatest good!"

This gives us the tone of the conversation between Augustine and his pupils. However free and merry the talks might be, the purpose was always instructive, and always solid. The Milan rhetorician is still the professor. The best part of the day is given to these two youths in his charge. As soon as he had settled the business of the farm, talked to the peasants, and given orders to the workmen, he took up his duties as tutor. In the morning they went over Virgil's Eclogues together. At night they discussed philosophy. When the weather was fine they walked in the fields, and continued the discussion under the shade of the chestnut trees. If it rained they took refuge in the sitting-room adjoining the baths. Couches were there, cushions, soft chairs convenient for talking, and the equable temperature from the vapor baths was good for Augustine's bronchitis. There was no stiffness in these dialogues, nothing which might smack of the

school. The discussion starts from things under their observation, often from some slight accidental happening. One night when Augustine couldn't sleep — he often suffered from insomnia — the dispute began in bed, for the master and his pupils slept in the same room. Lying there in the darkness, listening to the broken murmur of the stream, he was trying to think out an explanation of the pauses in the sound, when Licentius reached out for a stick lying on the floor, and rapped on the foot of the bed to frighten away the mice. Trigetius, too, was tossing about in bed. Augustine was delighted: he had two listeners. He immediately put this question: "Why do these pauses come in the flow of the stream? Do they not follow some secret law?" He had hit upon a subject for debate. During many days they discussed the order of the world. Another time as they were going into the baths they stopped to watch a pair of cocks fighting. Augustine called their attention "to a certain order full of propriety in all the movements of these fowls deprived of reason."

"Look at the conqueror," said he. "He crows triumphantly. He struts and plumes himself as a proud sign of victory. Now look at the beaten one, without voice, with his neck plucked, and a look of

shame. All that has a sort of beauty, in harmony with nature's laws."

A new argument in favor of order: the debate of the previous night is started again.

These incidents reveal an Augustine not only sensitive to beauty, but very observant of the ordinary sights about him. Cock fighting was still popular in Roman society at the end of the Empire. Sculptors had found many graceful subjects in the sport. A funeral urn depicts two little boys, one crying over his beaten cock, while the other holds his tenderly in his arms and kisses it — the victorious cock being identified by the crown held in its spurs. Everything in nature furnishes a subject for discussion, between Augustine and his pupils. Augustine welcomes all his guests into these dialogues, and admits them to the debates: his mother, his brother, his cousins, Alypius, between his business journeys, and the child Adeodatus. Monica often came in while they were arguing, to announce that dinner was ready, or for some like purpose. Her son asked her to remain. She modestly expressed astonishment at such an honor.

"Mother" said Augustine, "do you not love truth? Then why should you not have place amongst us? Even if your love of truth were only

half-hearted, I ought still receive you and listen to you. How much more then, since you love it more than you love me — and I know how much you love me! Nothing can separate you from truth, neither fear, nor pain of whatever kind it be — nor death itself. Do not all agree that this is the highest state of philosophy? How can I hesitate after that to call myself your disciple? ”

And Monica, utterly confused by such praise, rebuked him affectionately saying: “Hush, hush! You have never told bigger lies.”

Most of these conversations were dialectic games in the taste of the period — somewhat pedantic and tiring because of subtilty — and boisterous Licentius would show his weariness by loudly yawning — for which his master scolded him.

The substance of these gayly familiar dialogues “On Order,” “On the Academics,” “On the Happy Life,” is yet so serious, that Augustine had them reported in short-hand and afterwards published. They show us the state of his soul at a decisive moment of his life, and reveal his thoughts on the morrow of his conversion.

It is the last time before the coming of those centuries of universal intellectual silence or arid scholasticism, that lofty questions will be discussed

in this graceful way. The tradition begun by Socrates under the plane-trees of Ilissus, ended with Augustine under the chestnut trees of Cassiacum.

Those idyllic days among the mountain heights are but days of rest before the mighty battles ahead of him: battles of which he little dreamed and less liked, for his dreams were of solitude and peace, and all his inclinations were for intimate communion with God, so recently discovered, and to whom, with contrite anguish he cried out: "O Beauty, ever ancient, ever new! Too late have I Known Thee, too late have I loved Thee! "

BAPTISM AND VOCATION

CHAPTER XIV

BAPTISM AND VOCATION

They stayed through the winter at Cassiacum where, despite his many other duties, he devoted himself chiefly to the great business of his salvation.

The "Soliloquies," which he wrote then, give us the passionate tone of the meditations, in which he indulged during the long nights of sleeplessness. He sought after God, continually moaning: "Cause me to seek Thee. O my Father."

He began to realise that not in Philosophy but in Holy Scripture, would he find the wisdom he sought, if he would but hearken to it with a contrite and humble heart. He wrote to Ambrose asking for direction, who advised him to read Isaiah, because that prophet is the clearest fore-teller of the Redemption. But he found the book so difficult that he put it aside until later. Meanwhile, he had forwarded his resignation as professor of Rhetoric, to the Milan municipality. Then he forwarded to

Ambrose a written confession of his errors and faults, and announced his firm intention to be baptised. He quietly received that sacrament on the twenty-fifth of April, during the Easter season of 387, together with his son Adeodatus, and his friend Alypius, — who had prepared himself most fervently, by practicing the harshest austerities, even walking barefoot on the frozen ground.

The solitaries are now back in Milan. The two pupils are gone. Trigetius, to the army; Licentius to Rome. But another fellow-countryman from Thagaste, Evodius, formerly a clerk in the Ministry of the Interior, came to join the converts. He was a man of scrupulous piety and unquestioning faith, having been baptised for some time. He talked on devout subjects with his friends, just fresh from baptism, who were experiencing all the quiet tranquillity of grace. They spoke of joining the community which Ambrose had founded near the gates of Milan, and of the austerities practiced there. But Augustine felt that he was called to live as a hermit, after the manner of St. Anthony and the solitaries of the Thebaid. It then occurred to him that he still had a little property at Thagaste — a house and fields. There they would go and lead a life of self-denial like the cenobites. Adeodatus

seemed predestined for this ascetic existence, and Monica would have to make no change in her way of living, to lead a saintly life with her son and grandson. It was agreed, therefore, among them all to go back to Thagaste, and as soon as possible.

Thus, just after baptism, Augustine has but one desire: to bury himself in a retreat, there to lead a humble and hidden life, divided between the study of Scripture and the contemplation of God.

In the course of the summer the little caravan crossed the Apennines, to set sail at Ostia. It was a trying journey, especially in the heated season. When Monica arrived at the sea-port city, she was greatly exhausted. They had to wait until a ship was sailing for Africa, and propitious weather conditions did not happen every day. At this season of the year, travellers were at the mercy of the wind-swept sea, and many other unpleasant circumstances. Time did not count with the masters of the ships. They sailed but short distances at a time, skirting the coasts; remaining at any port touched upon, according as their humor dictated. On these wretched feluccas, scarcely decked over, the crossing was a slow process; besides being unsafe, and most uncomfortable. People were not in a hurry to undergo the tortures of it, and eased them

as much as possible, by frequent stoppages. On account of all these reasons, our travellers made a rather long stay at Ostia.

Ostia, situated at the mouth of the Tiber, was both the port and the bond-warehouse of Rome. Government store-ships landed the African corn and oil there. It was a junction of commerce, where immigrants from all parts of the Mediterranean debarked, the cosmopolitan crowds overflowing into the lodging houses along the quay.

Without doubt Augustine and his party lodged with Christian acquaintances away from the noise of the landing place, for they found opportunity to give themselves to prayer in retirement. Amid the vulgar, bustling activities of trade and sea-faring, the purified love of mother and son gleams upon us with a glorified light; for at Ostia they had, as it were, a foretaste of the eternal union with God.

As they leaned upon the window ledge of the house wherein they lodged, they could see afar off the violet outlines of the Alban mountains veiled and dream-like in the distance. Nearer, the undulations of the Roman hills merge into a vast, desolate plain faintly tinged with rose color and green, broken by groves of trees or patches of gorse.

It was towards evening, at the hour when south-

ern windows are thrown open to the coolness after the heat of a burning day. A garden lay beneath them, whence arose the perfume of flowers and the tonic odors of pine and box. The lapsing river reflected the rose and golden splendor of the arching sky, where, already, the evening star twinkled like a mammoth diamond.

“We marvelled at Thy works, O God,” writes Augustine “and then we soared with glowing hearts on high. . . . We panted with the mouth of our heart after the heaven-streams of Thy fountain, — the fountain of life which is with Thee. . . . And whilst, amid our talk, this world and all its delights, seemed contemptible to us, she said to me: ‘Son, for my part, there is nothing now in this life that gives me any delight. What I have to do here any longer or why I am here, I know not, all my hopes in this world being now at an end. One thing there was for which I did desire to stay a little longer in this life, which was that I might see thee a catholic Christian before I died. My God hath granted me this more abundantly than I had asked, in that I see thee now despising all earthly felicity, entirely devoted to His service. What have I now to do here?’

“What answer I made her I do not remember

clearly. But scarcely more than five days after this, she fell into a fever; and one day, being very ill, she swooned away and for a while lay unconscious. We ran in, but she soon came to herself again, and looking upon me and my brother who were standing beside her stricken with grief, — she said: ‘Here you shall bury your mother.’ I held my peace and refrained from weeping; but my brother said something about it being more happy, if she might not die abroad, but in her own country. But she with concern in her countenance, rebuked him with her eyes, that he should have such notions; then looking at me she said: ‘Lay this body anywhere; be not concerned about that; only this I beg of you, that wherever you are, you will make remembrance of me at the Lord’s altar.’ ”

Augustine was surprised and edified at her holy resignation to die so far away from her African home, — for she had always expressed a strong desire to be buried beside her husband. Sometime afterward he learned from friends that when they expressed astonishment that she was content to leave her body at such a distance from her native city, — she answered: “Nothing is far off from God; neither do I need fear that He should not

know at the end of the world, whence to raise me up again."

"Therefore in the ninth day of her illness, the fifty-sixth year of her age, and the thirty-third of mine, that religious and holy soul was loosed from her body " writes Augustine.

He closed her eyes, while bitter grief caused tears to roll down his cheeks. Adeodatus, the boy who loved them both so tenderly, admonished his father's grief; and then fell into wild weeping himself, to be admonished in turn for giving way to such sorrow. Thus, for love of each other, was grief outwardly restrained, that inwardly anguished their hearts.

When the burial was over and Augustine was alone by himself; alone, with God as the only witness, "I let go my tears" he says, "that they might flow as much as they pleased; making a bed of them, as it were, for my heart to rest upon. . . . And if anyone shall find it a sin, that I should thus weep for my mother, for some part of an hour; for my mother, who for so many years had wept for me. . . . Let him not deride me for it but, rather let him weep for my sins to Thee, the common father of all the brethren of Thy Christ."

For over twenty years Augustine offered the Sac-

rifice of the Mass for his mother's soul. " I know that she did mercifully, and from her heart forgave her debtors, all their trespasses; do Thou likewise forgive her debts, if she hath contracted some in those many years she lived after the saving Water. Forgive them O Lord, forgive them, I beseech Thee, that Thou enter not into judgment with her, but let Thy mercy exalt itself above Thy judgment." And thus to the end of his life he pleaded.

THE MONK OF THAGASTE

CHAPTER XV

THE MONK OF THAGASTE

Almost a year passed away before Augustine continued his homeward journey. The business of his mother's funeral delayed him until nearly the beginning of winter. Then the season of storms set in, making the sea dangerous. In November, navigation closed regularly until Spring. Then, too, word came that Maxentius the usurper, at war with Theodosius, had blockaded the African coast. Travellers ran the risk of being captured by the enemy. All these reasons would have prevented Augustine from sailing until the end of the following summer.

Meanwhile, he went to live in Rome, where he brilliantly defended himself against the attacks of the Manichees, by a thorough study of their doctrines, and by gathering a mass of documentary evidence of their moral delinquencies. He also visited the Roman monasteries, studying their rules and

organization, so to decide on the model of the one he intended to establish at Thagaste. At last he went back to Ostia and set sail for Carthage in the summer of 388.

He had a calm crossing, as it is the season for smooth seas. The Mediterranean is never lovelier than in the months of August and September. A pale blue sky blends with a pale blue sea, that is like an unrippled silken sheet flushed with amber and saffron glow at sunset. Nothing is distinct in the soft suffusions of pearly haze that veils the wistful blue reaching away indefinitely.

At Carthage, Augustine had grown accustomed to this magnificent pageantry of the sea. It had now the same tranquil beauty he had seen four years earlier, when he had stolen away in the misty night watches, leaving his anxious mother to weep bitter tears at the little shrine of St. Cyprian. But how he had changed! Then, he was the self-sufficient Professor of Rhetoric, vain of his gifts of intellect and of oratory, ambitious of earthly honor and glory; now, he was the humble penitent, enlightened by God's grace, whose one desire was to hide himself in solitude in order to commune with his Maker! Instead of the tumult of falsehood which had rent his heart, and filled it with darkness,

the serene light of Truth now illumined it, filling it with a peace deeper than the sea's tranquillity. His passions were stilled; all that enthralled him in that earlier life was but an unpleasant dream. In the joy of his newly found happiness, he marvelled that those figments of enjoyment ever deluded his mind. He believed that this blissful state was going to continue and fill all the hours of his life, and could imagine nothing so sweet.

But, again, he was mistaken about himself. Upon the deck of the boat which carried him, he did not feel the power of the immense element now asleep under his feet, but quick to be unleashed at the first gust of the wind; neither did he feel the overflowing energy swelling in his heart, renewed by Grace; — an energy which was going to set in motion one of the most complete and powerful influences, one richest in thought and charity and works, that has enlightened the world.

After skirting the Sicilian coast, they arrived at Carthage, but did not linger there. Augustine was eager to see Thagaste once more, and there renounce the world forever.

When he reached his home-town, he made himself immediately popular by giving the poor, what little remained of his father's heritage, except the

house wherein he was born. This, he made over to the Catholic body, on condition of having its use, and receiving for himself and his companions the necessities of life. It was the custom for pious people to act in this way, when they gave their property to the Church. As church goods were unseizable and free from taxation, it was a means of security against fiscal extortion, whether in the form of arbitrary confiscation, or eviction by force of arms. Souls, weary of the world and longing for repose, found in those bequests, a means of saving themselves the trouble of looking after a fortune or landed estate. When these fortunes and lands were extensive, the generous donors found actual relief in getting rid of them.

This financial question being settled, Augustine changed the house into a monastery, such as he had seen at Rome and Milan. His son Adeodatus, his friends Alypius, Evodius and Severus, — afterwards Bishop of Milevis — were his companions in solitude. Thus, the roof that sheltered Monica, the model Christian wife and mother, became the shelter and novitiate of four bishops: Augustine of Hippo, Alypius of Thagaste, Evodius of Upsala and Severus of Milevis. When the community shall have been transferred to Hippo, ten bishops shall

be chosen from its members, all of whom were judged worthy of the title of saint.

At first the rule was a little easy, no doubt. They were not confined in a cloister, and were simply obliged to certain fasts, a special diet, and to prayers and meditation in common.

Augustine was happy. He had realised the project which he had had so long at heart: To enter into himself, to pray, and above all, to study Holy Scripture; to fathom its most obscure places; to comment upon them with all the fervor and piety of soul, — it seemed to him that he had enough there to fill all the moments of his life. But he also finished or revised school treatises begun at Milan, — all of which have been lost except those treating of Grammar and Music. This last, he considers a recreation. The Monk of Thagaste only rests from prayer and meditation to study music and poetry; and for this, he has thought it necessary to excuse himself. “In all this” he says “I had but one purpose. As I did not want to pluck away too suddenly either young men, or those of another age, on whom God had bestowed good wits, from ideas of the senses and worldly literature — things that it is very hard not to be attached to — I have tried by reasoning lessons to turn them little by little, and

by the love of unchanging truth, to attach them to God, sole Master of all things. . . . If I have touched upon the poets and grammarians, it was more by the exigencies of the journey than by any desire to settle among them. . . . Such is the life I have chosen to walk with the feeble, not being very strong myself, rather than to hurl myself out upon the void with wings still half-fledged." Augustine has nothing of the fanatic about him. He knows what man is; that life here below is a voyage among other men as weak as himself, and he fits in with the needs of the journey. As a prudent guide of souls, he did not want to ascend the heights too rapidly.

Still another object may be discerned in these educational works — namely, to prove to pagans that one may be a Christian and yet not a barbarian and ignorant. None of his adversaries can cope with him either in breadth of knowledge, or in happy versatility, or in plenitude of intellectual gifts. He had the heritage of the entire pagan world between his hands.

He had come to Thagaste with the intention of retiring from the world and living in God; and here he is disputing, lecturing and writing more than ever.

He also keeps up a voluminous correspondence with Nebridius, Romanianus, Paulinus of Nola; he writes to people in Africa, Spain, Italy and Palestine. In times to come those letters will be real encyclicals, read throughout Christendom. His controversies will be spoken of elsewhere.

Besides all this he interests himself in his fellow-townsmen. Augustine was an important personage at Thagaste. The people were proud of him; and, as they were afraid that some neighboring town might steal away their great man, they kept a guard around his dwelling. They even prevented him from showing himself too much in the neighborhood. Augustine agreed with all this, and lived as retired as possible, for he was afraid of being made a priest, or a bishop in spite of himself.

Despite all this supervision, this unremitting rush of business, the work of all kinds that he undertook, he experienced at Thagaste a peace which he was never to find again. It was the resting time wherein he gathered strength before the exhausting labors of the great apostolate head. In this Numidian country, so verdant and so cool, where a thousand memories of his childhood encompassed him, where he could not take a step without encountering the ever-living image of his mother, he soared towards

God with increasing confidence. His weak lungs inhaled deliciously the resinous breath of the pine trees. He listened like a musician to the orchestra of birds and then wrote: "Tell me, does not the nightingale seem to modulate her voice delightfully? Is not her song, so harmonious, so soft, so well attuned to the season, the very voice of Spring?"

PRIESTHOOD

CHAPTER XVI

PRIESTHOOD

The peaceful days at Thagaste did not last very long. The time of tribulation is at hand. As a gradual preparation for the battles ahead, sorrow steeled his soul for conflict: Adeodatus and Nebri-
dus were both taken from him by death. August-
tine grieved deeply over the loss of his gifted son,
but mastered his sorrow by all the strength of his
Christian hope.

His love for Adeodatus was a mingling of pride
and affection. The boy was so intellectual, so lov-
ing, so angelically innocent that he inspired his
father with a species of awe. His death struck him
to the heart. Years after he wrote of him: "Lord,
early didst Thou cut him off from the earth, but I
have not the shadow of misgiving regarding his boy-
hood or his youth, or the man he would have been."

The death of Nebridus, although a sincere sor-
row, was not unexpected, as the young man had
long been ailing.

This spoiled child of an adoring mother, wrote Augustine reproachfully for not making some arrangement for their being together; to which gentle petulance Augustine replied, pointing out the impossibility. Shall he send a carriage to bring him to Thagaste? But Nebridius is sick, and his mother, who was unwilling to part with him when in health, would be still less willing in the state of suffering in which he now is. Should Augustine go to him? But he has companions, whom he cannot bring with him, and whom he believes it his duty not to part from. Nebridius is capable of conversing usefully with himself, Augustine's young companions are not. Should he come and go, and spend his time sometimes with him and sometimes with them? But that would not be to live together or to live according to their plans. From Thagaste to the home of Nebridius is not a mere drive, it is a journey, and in these continual journeys there would be neither repose nor leisure. Besides he, too, is suffering; he cannot do all that he would wish, and resigns himself not to wish what he cannot do. All these cares of coming and going do not belong to those who are thinking of that last long journey called death, the only journey which deserves to occupy the mind of man. There are privi-

leged persons who, in the confusion of travel, preserve the peace and calm of their heart, and who, amid confusion, do not lose sight of their latter end. But Augustine finds it difficult to familiarise himself with death in the midst of the bustle of affairs. He needs a profound retreat, and entire separation from noise.

What tenderness of heart, what loving patience, what gentle admonitions are here expressed in most persuasive language!

A short time afterward, Nebridius died a Christian death, and Augustine wrote of him in "The Confessions": "Whatever that be which is signified by the Bosom of Abraham, there lives my Nebridius, my sweet friend, and Thy child, O Lord; there he liveth; for what other place is there for such a soul?"

About this time, an important personage in the service of the State at Hippo, was desirous of becoming a Catholic and even a religious. When he heard of the learned theologian and ascetic of Thagaste, he expressed a desire to confer with him on these subjects. Augustine's zeal led him to comply with his wishes; as Hippo, being supplied with a bishop, seemed a safe place to adventure.

Arrived at the city, he was present in the Basilica

of Peace, at the very time when the Bishop was preaching to the people and insisting on the necessity of their supplying a new priest for the service of God, and to assist him in his duties.

At this time, as we know, there was the widespread practice of forcing ordination and consecration upon men who, in the judgment of the Church, were well qualified to be priests and bishops, in spite of their unwillingness. The theory underlying this strange action was, that the men best fitted for it were the most likely to shrink from the responsibilities of the sacred ministry, and their unwillingness was taken as another proof of their fitness. It was considered right, therefore, to use a holy violence in forcing them to become priests and bishops.

While Valerius was speaking about the need of another priest, someone recognized Augustine and made known that he was present; the people laid hands on him, and at once presented him to the Bishop for ordination. He made what opposition he could, but without avail; thus, by surprise, he was ordained priest, despite his humble desire to remain a recluse. Towards the end of the year 390 he began his ministry at Hippo. The talents of the young priest were a veritable godsend to the old Bishop, a man of earnest piety but a Greek, whose

inability to preach fluently in Latin was a great disadvantage to himself and to the Catholic cause. He not only made Augustine preach habitually from the pulpit — a privilege which bishops alone exercised — but he was glad to entrust him with almost the entire administration of the diocese.

The little community at Thagaste, thus suddenly deprived of its head, was not broken up. After his ordination, Augustine obtained permission from the Bishop for a short retreat at Thagaste, in order to prepare his soul for the sacred duties forced upon him. He then made all preparations for transferring his companions to Hippo; and soon after his return to the episcopal city, he established a similar monastery in the garden adjoining the basilica, where Alypius and the others rejoined him, and new disciples were soon added to their number. There Augustine resumed his chosen way of living, as far as his priestly duties permitted.

His reputation as a holy priest increased day by day, and the good old Bishop and the people came to fear that he might be taken from them to fill some vacant See — and thus lose his invaluable services and great talents. Valerius, moreover, was growing less able to fulfill the duties of the Episcopate. He therefore decided that Augustine should be con-

secrated his co-adjutor with the right of succession. The consecration took place at the close of the year 395. Within a few months Valerius died, and at the age of forty-one, Augustine commenced the episcopate, which for thirty-five years he indeed exercised at Hippo, for the benefit of the whole Church, not only for that age, but for all succeeding centuries.

When he had succeeded to the See, he turned the episcopal residence into a kind of monastery, which became, in time, the theological seminary of the diocese; and even for the neighboring dioceses, as the fame of the learning and holiness of the inmates had spread far and wide.

AUGUSTINE THE BISHOP

CHAPTER XVII

AUGUSTINE THE BISHOP

Hippo was a small city, but its situation as a seaport and its fortifications gave it a certain importance. It was situated on a bold promontory formed by the Papuan mountain, a spur of the Atlas range, which here projects itself into the Great Sea. The principal buildings were a basilica, baths, and a fortified palace which was built on one of the two hills which lay within its enclosure. Two rivers washed its walls. The population consisted of various discordant elements. The Donatists were the most numerous and dominant party; but there were a large number of Manichees and some Arians. There was also a strong pagan element and a considerable proportion of Jews. It may be readily seen, therefore, that the Catholic Church had no easy position among all these opponents, and that Augustine had no easy task before him.

When he came into power the heretic Donatists

greatly outnumbered the Catholics, we know. They had their own basilica, and their own bishop and were constantly on the alert to annoy the orthodox Christians, on every possible occasion.

The schismatic church was quite near the Catholic church — the Basilica of Peace — and the members purposely made so much noise that it greatly interfered with Augustine's preaching.

Let us listen to him in the Basilica of Peace, where for thirty-five years, he never failed to announce the Word of God. . . . The chanting of the Psalms has just died away. At the far end of the apse, Augustine rises from his throne with its back to the wall, his pale face distinct against the golden hue of the mosaic. From that place, as from the height of a pulpit, he commands the congregation, looking at them above the altar which is a plain wooden table placed at the end of the great aisle.

The congregation is standing, the men on one side, the women on the other. On the inner side of the railing which protects them from the crowd, are the consecrated widows and virgins, wrapped in their black and purple veils. Some matrons, rather overdressed, lean forward in the front rank of the galleries. Their cheeks and lips are painted, their

eyebrows and eyelashes are blackened, their ears and necks are overloaded with jewels.

Augustine has noticed them; after a while he will read them a lesson. The congregation is all alive with sympathy and curiosity before he begins. With all their faith and all their passion, the people collaborate with the preacher. They express their opinions and emotions with perfect freedom, applauding as if in a theatre. Some interrupt the speaker to dispute with him, quoting passages from Scripture, in proof of what they say.

Augustine is thus in perpetual communication with his audience, to whom he speaks in familiar language, never soaring above its comprehension by oratorical flights of rhetoric. He reserves that for his heretic opponents. He keeps his eye upon the facial expressions and attitudes of his hearers, and when he perceives weariness, he sends them away to rest and eat. "Go, my very dear brothers and sisters, go and restore your strength — I do not mean that of your minds, for I see that they are tireless, — but the strength of your bodies, so that they may do their work well; and when they are restored, come back here and take your spiritual food."

This good-natured way won the hearts of the

simple folk who listened to him. He is quite aware of the charm he wields over them, and of the sympathy they gratefully give him in return for his charity.

“ You love to come and hear me, my brothers,” he says to them “ but whom have you loved? If it is I — ah, even that is good, for I want to be loved by you, if I do not want to be loved for myself. As for me, I love you in Christ. And you, too, do you love also me in Him. Let our love for one another moan up to God — for that is the moaning of the Dove spoken of in Scripture.”

He puts himself on an equal footing with his hearers by the brotherly tone of his words. He makes himself as little the Bishop as possible.

“ All Christians are servants of the same Master ” he says. “ I have been in the same place where you are — you, my brothers, who listen to me. And now, if I give spiritual bread from the height of this chair to the servants of the Master of us all — Well, it is but a few years since I received this spiritual food with them in a lower place. A bishop, I speak to laymen, but I don’t know to how many future bishops I speak.”

Another day he speaks on death. “ Some one you love has ceased to live, you hear her voice no

more, she mingles no more among the living, and you, you weep. Do you also weep over the seed when you have cast it into the ground? If a man, knowing of what happens when one casts seed into the earth, were to lament over the loss of the corn; if he were to fix his eyes full of tears upon the clods which cover it, you, better informed than he, would you not pity his ignorance, and would you not say to him: Trouble not yourself; that which you have buried is no longer in the barn, it is no longer within your reach, but wait a few days and this field which seems to you so barren will be covered with an abundant harvest, and you shall be filled with joy at the sight; as we who, knowing that this will happen, are full of joy in the hope? ”

“ The thought of immortality comes to alleviate the melancholy image of the grave. St. Paul calls the dead *them that sleep*, in order to the awaking: that is the resurrection.”

“ The Lord, speaking of His own future death has said: ‘ Except a grain of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it shall bring forth much fruit.’ It is the example of a single grain, but it is a great example, that all ought to have faith because of it. Moreover every creature, if we will hearken, speaks to us of the

resurrection; and these daily examples ought to make us know what God will do also with the human race."

Speaking of the soul he says: "The spirit which gives life to each one of us is called the soul, and you see what the soul effects in the body: it puts life into all its members. By the eyes it sees; by the ears it hears; by the nose it smells; by the tongue it speaks; by the feet it walks; by the hands it labors; it is present in all the members that they may live; it gives life to all, and to each its function. The eyes do not hear; the ears do not see; neither the eyes nor the ears speak; and while the whole lives the functions are divided, the life is common. So is the Church of God. In some of the saints it works miracles; in others it preaches the truth . . . the works are different according to the difference of the persons. Each has his peculiar work, but all participate in the same life. That which the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church. But observe what it is you ought to avoid doing, and to fear. In the human body it sometimes happens that a member is cut off — a hand, a finger, a foot. While it was joined to the body it lived; when it is cut off it loses life. So the Christian, while he is a member of the

Church, his life in his body, he is a Catholic. Is he cut off — he becomes a heretic; the Spirit does not accompany the severed member.”

But his episcopal duties comprised more than preaching to the people and performing religious functions. Augustine, who had made a vow of poverty, and given his heritage to the poor, by a cruel irony became a great landowner as soon as he was made Bishop. Without doubt he had stewards under him to look after the property of the diocese, but this did not save him from going into details of management and supervising his agents, that equity be dealt to all. On horseback or muleback, he rode for miles through the country about Hippo, visiting vineyards and olivets. He gave plenty of proof that no detail of country life was unfamiliar to him, — his experience at Cassiacum having given him the necessary training for this part of his duty.

These journeys in the open air, however tiring they might be, were good for his lungs and a rest for his overworked brain. But there was one duty that wearied him to disgust. Every day he had to listen to parties in dispute and give judgment; for a bishop, according to a recent Imperial legislation, had become judge in civil cases — a tiresome and endless work in a country where tricky quibbling

raged with obstinate fury. The litigants over-ran his house, they pursued him. As soon as he appeared he was mobbed. They kissed his hands, protesting their respect and obedience as they urged him to busy himself about their affairs. He yielded; but the next day in a vehement sermon he cried out to them: "Go far from me, ye wicked ones, and let me study in peace the commandments of my God!"

The only resting time he had was in prayer; the only recreation was in the company of his fellow-monks, when in the eventide they gathered together for mutual discourse.

He ever had a tender love for the poor, whom he consoled by his words and acts, giving them courage by his own example.

Even when exercising in an official capacity, he would not wear a costly garment. When some were presented to him, he sold them and gave the price to the poor. In a sermon he explains this action: "Perhaps a bishop may be allowed to wear a costly robe" he said "but such does not become Augustine, who is poor, and born of poor parents. . . . Would you that men should say that I had found in the Church the means of clothing myself more expensively than I should have done in my father's

house or in secular life? . . . If you wish me to wear the garments given me, give me such as I shall not blush to wear; but I confess that a costly garment does make me blush. It does not become my condition, it does not accord with my preaching; it is not suitable to a body broken by age, and to these grey hairs which you see."

But he had too much moderation to push religious poverty to the extremes so common in that day. The Bishop ruled on the principles which he had so strongly recommended in his book "On the Manners of Catholics," not forcing men to austerities beyond their powers or against their will. But he was firm on the fundamental basis of his rule. "They have agreed with cheerfulness to the rule which I have established" he said. "I trust in the power and mercy of God that they will conform to it in perfect faithfulness."

HIS BOOKS AND CONTROVERSIES

CHAPTER XVIII

HIS BOOKS AND CONTROVERSIES

Merely to give a catalogue of the numerous books of Augustine would fill several pages, and would be outside the purpose of this one. It will be more useful to speak of the two most popular, and of the one less well known but greater work "On the Holy Trinity," all written during his life at Hippo.

First in interest is the "Confessions" which has had the largest circulation of any of his works, and is sometimes classed with "The Imitation of Christ," as to popularity. Its characteristics are frankness, a wonderful analysis of the human heart, and literary excellence. No doubt the great cause of its popularity is that it has supplied a mirror in which so many have recognised the likeness of their own spiritual struggles, have learned to understand themselves, and to study the process by which they might co-operate with the grace of God in the at-

* end.

tainment of light and peace. As an autobiography it ends with his thirty-third year.

Next in interest is "The City of God," one of the most important literary monuments of Christian antiquity. It has been called the "Encyclopedia of the 5th Century" as it traverses the entire field of ancient knowledge. It was undertaken as a defence against Paganism, and as an elucidation of the words of the Prophet regarding the Church of Christ: "A city set upon a hill, unto which all the nations shall go up." It is also spoken of as the Christian poem of the destinies of the human race.

The work "On The Holy Trinity" he began, he says, when he was young and finished when he was old. The subject had engaged all the great minds of the Eastern Church for a century, but was less understood in the West because the writings of the Greeks had not been translated into Latin and were unknown except to a few of its most learned scholars. The doctrine, therefore, remained to be set before the Western Church as fully and profoundly as it had been before the Eastern Church. This task Augustine accomplished.

No one has written with more profound insight, more sound theology, or greater eloquence on this

great theme. All subsequent writers have done little more than reproduce his thoughts.

The lovely legend attached to this great work is known to nearly everyone; but for the sake of even one, to whom it may not be known, it is here repeated. One day as Augustine was walking along the sea-shore at Hippo, he saw a beautiful little boy busily engaged digging a hole in the sand, and then filling it with water brought in a cockle-shell from the sea. "What are you doing, my child?" asked Augustine. "I am trying to empty the sea into this hole which I have dug" said the child. "But it is impossible to put the sea into that small hole" said the Bishop. "Not more impossible, Augustine," said the angel, "than for thy finite mind to comprehend the mystery of the Trinity."

There were also three great controversies in which Augustine was engaged — not to mention occasional treatises against expiring pagan philosophy, and Arianism revived in Africa by the influx of the Arian Vandals — three great controversies extending over a number of years and overlapping one another.

The first was the Manichean controversy, already mentioned. Manicheism was indeed dying out without Augustine's aid, but his own experience

made him consider it a duty specially incumbent upon him to let no opportunity pass for opposing the errors which had deluded himself so long. The second was the controversy against Donatism. As this was the greatest evil against which the African Church had to contend, Augustine's triumph over it was a great achievement.

The Donatists claimed that the Catholic Church, which had been the true Church of Christ, had fallen into error, and that they had cut off from it in consequence, in order to reform it. (The same chant has been heard in our own times!) The way they set about "reforming" it was in committing atrocities of cruelty and by abusive language. There was a group among them called circumcelliones (cellar spies) who were proto-types of the Ku Klux Klan in their methods of action.

When Augustine came to Hippo, he set himself with great earnestness and zeal to oppose them, but it was all governed by the greatest charity. He did not aim so much to overcome them as to win them back to unity. "If you are the Church of God" he said to them "give an account of your Chair. Who was it that first sat in the Chair of Peter? Who succeeded him, and so on down? If you are ignorant — learn! If you know it — blush!"

He can't
appear mistaken
the real thing is
did that other church

As an echo of his argument came the trumpet tones of Optatus of Milevis: " Either the Catholic Church was the Church of Christ, before you reformers came, or it was not. If it was, and it fell into error — then Christ failed in His promise! If it did not — then how dare you set yourselves up against it? " Caught between the horns of that dilemma they were silent.

The Pelagian controversy was that wherein Augustine exercised the most powerful influence on his own age, and which has chiefly made his authority important through succeeding centuries.

Pelagius, it was said, was the Greek form of the English name Morgan, meaning sea-born. The man who bore it had lived in Rome for a time, and had been admitted into the highest Christian society, where his abilities obtained for him considerable reputation.

At Rome, he became acquainted with Celestius, whom St. Jerome mentions as being " heavy with Scotch porridge." Both had embraced the ascetic life, like all of the foremost churchmen of the time. Pelagius had become imbued with false notions relating to the nature of man and his relation to God, which he taught privately, and with which Celestius became infected also; the latter being more

outspoken and self-assertive in regard to his opinions, which brought him into considerable notoriety as a heretic.

After the sack of Rome, the two friends sought refuge, like so many others, in Africa. Pelagius, after a short stay at Carthage, went on to the Holy Land, leaving Celestius behind him. It is said that they never met again.

The controversy began when Celestius sought to be ordained a priest at Carthage, and was opposed by Paulinus the biographer of Ambrose, who charged him with heretical opinions. The question was examined by a synod where he was condemned and excommunicated. He appealed to Rome which took no notice of him. He then left Carthage and went to Ephesus.

The progress of the new opinions made such headway, that Aurelius the Bishop requested Augustine to preach against them at Carthage. By request he also wrote his tracts on the subject.

The history of the controversy now shifts to Pelagius in the Holy Land. At first, Jerome was on friendly terms with him as a learned ascetic, but he soon found out his heterodox views and became his vehement opponent.

Nevertheless, the views of Pelagius became wide-

spread, the war against them continuing for many years. In all this controversy Augustine, with the general assent, took foremost place as the champion of orthodox truth. Two councils of bishops, formally charged him to deal with the heresy in a special work. When Jerome heard of it he said: "Since Augustine, this holy and eloquent bishop, has resolved to write against Pelagius, I consider myself dispensed from this duty, considering it unnecessary. For either I should say the same things as he, which would be superfluous; or I should say different things, and then I could not be otherwise than inferior to this eminent mind, which will always anticipate me in that which it is best to say." He also wrote to Augustine saying: "Preserve this great reputation which you have acquired throughout the whole world. The Catholics respect and admire you as the restorer of the ancient faith, and what is not less glorious, you are an object of hate and terror to the heretics." This last is a truly characteristic touch of the warrior spirit of indomitable Jerome.

AUGUSTINE AND JEROME

CHAPTER XIX

AUGUSTINE AND JEROME

The relations of Augustine and Jerome have ever been most interesting, and of much importance. The contrast between these great men — the greatest churchmen of their age — heightens this interest. The aged and learned recluse, the erstwhile brilliant courtier, the former secretary of the Pope and director of the pious association formed by the noble ladies of Rome; the one time candidate for the Papacy itself, had for years lived in the strict seclusion of his cell, near the Cave of Bethlehem. He was the greatest scholar of the age, and from his pen proceeded those careful revisions of the Bible, those invaluable translations, those learned commentaries, which have been of such inestimable value to the Church from that day to this. But age, which had ripened his scholarship and increased his reputation, had not entirely tamed his temper or taken off the edge of his caustic pen.

The youthful Bishop of Hippo was rapidly acquiring a reputation, not inferior to that of the Recluse of Bethlehem, but springing from different qualities. Augustine was the profoundest Christian metaphysician of that or perhaps any subsequent age; as skilled in the art of controversy as the Sage of Bethlehem, but his opposite in tone; courteous and polished; always seeking to persuade and win, rather than refute and overwhelm like Jerome.

This comparison between them will make better understood the years of controversy in which they were engaged. The merest sketch of the discussion will be sufficient in order to further illustrate the character of Augustine, which is the writer's only aim.

At the beginning of the year 395, Augustine then a priest at Hippo aged forty-one, wrote for the first time to the illustrious Solitary of Bethlehem, then aged sixty. He recently had news of him from Alypius, who had just returned from the Holy Land. He tells him that he knows him through his works, as well as he knows any man in the world; what he does not know of him is the least important part of him — his person; and even in this respect, the description of Alypius has put him, as it were, living before his eyes. He begs him to oblige the

Christian students of Africa by giving them a Latin translation of the Greek version of the Holy Scriptures. Lastly, he touches upon his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, with one passage of which Augustine gently disagrees, begging Jerome's serious re-consideration of the question.

This letter was entrusted to Profuturus, who was about going to the Holy Land; he was also the bearer of some of Augustine's works which he sends for Jerome's acceptance; begging him to give his impartial criticisms, quoting from the Psalms: "The righteous shall reprove me and correct me with mercy." He goes on to say that he is a bad judge of his own writings, sometimes through lack of self-confidence, sometimes through too much self-satisfaction. Unfortunately for the epistle, just as Profuturus was about to depart, he was forced to become the Bishop of Constantine, and the books and letter did not reach Bethlehem.

Two years later, Augustine, now bishop, received a letter from Jerome, introducing some traveller to his good offices, and he took this opportunity to write again. His letter is full of terms of respect and affection; but he returns again to the question on which he had already written. This letter was entrusted to a priest named Paul for conveyance;

but, most unfortunately, this letter also failed to reach its destination. Neither of the letters, however, were lost, but were handed about with other writings of Augustine; they were copied and got into general circulation; and only in this way, after long delay, came indirectly to the knowledge of Jerome. After seven years had elapsed from the date of the first letter sent, a traveller from the Holy Land informed Augustine that it was the talk of the monasteries of Bethlehem that he had attacked Jerome in a book which he had not sent to him, and that he was seeking to increase his own reputation by attacking Jerome without giving him the chance to reply. Augustine immediately wrote again, disclaiming the writing of such a book and being actuated by such intentions. Jerome then replied at length. He was not charged with attacking him in a book, but in a letter, in which he thought he recognised Augustine's style; but since it did not bear his signature, and had only come into his hands indirectly, he had hesitated in concluding that it was his, lest he should do him an injustice. He begs to be excused from entering into a controversy; pleading that he is an old man who, in his day, did what he could; now it is Augustine's turn. He then reminds him of the proverb which says: "The tired

ox treads the more heavily " and concludes with expressions of good-will.

In reply, Augustine allays the anger of Jerome by expressions of regret, submission and affection which the warm-hearted old saint could not resist. He then entered into the serious discussion of the subject to which Augustine had invited him; the correspondence extending over several years. There is reason to believe that the arguments of Augustine, on mature consideration, had their effect on Jerome, for the former, writing to Oceanus, a Roman friend of Jerome, quotes the latter as saying that all bishops are open to blame, " since St. Paul found something to blame in St. Peter." The controversy had hinged upon that saying of Paul — " I withstood Peter to his face."

LAST DAYS

CHAPTER XX

LAST DAYS

For many years the Christian world had been convulsed by the ' wars and rumors of war ' that schism, heresy and the Barbarian Invasion had brought upon it. The Golden City had been sacked and looted by Alaric and his Gothic hordes. The rich inhabitants had fled from the cruelty and greed of the invaders to the thought-to-be safety of African shores. But the Carthaginians loved gold quite as well as the barbarian vandals, and when the Roman refugees landed with their rescued wealth, they were plundered mercilessly by the inhabitants of the African city. These multimillionaires in flight, were a veritable windfall to the country. They were bled without pity. Where they expected safety and protection, they were pillaged ruthlessly.

Quicker than anyone else, Heraclinus the military governor of Africa, was on the spot to pick the

pockets of the fleeing aristocrats. If he did not get all that he desired, he seized the most distinguished ladies, and only released them when he had extorted a large ransom. If that was not forthcoming, he sold these delicate, high-bred patricians to the slave merchants of the East.

In one of his sermons, Augustine has transmitted to us an echo of the general panic. "Horrible things," said he, "have been told us. There have been ruins, and fires, and rapine, and murder, and torture. That is true; we have heard it many times; we have often wept, and we have been hardly able to console ourselves."

"This devastation" says Posidonius, who was an eye-witness of it, has "embittered the latter days of Augustine's life. He saw the towns ruined, the country houses destroyed, the inhabitants killed or fugitives, the churches destitute of priests, the virgins and religious dispersed. Some had succumbed to torments, others had perished by the sword, others again were carried into captivity and served hard and brutal masters."

A great number of bishops and persons of highest rank were reduced to slavery, compelled to carry loads like beasts of burden, and urged onward with the points of spears or swords. Mansuetus, bishop

of Utica, was burnt alive. Papianus, bishop of Vita, had his body covered with plates of red-hot iron.

At last the day came, when Hippo itself, — the sole remaining stronghold in the country was besieged by the hordes of Genseric. From the end of May, 430, the episcopal city was blockaded on the land side and on the side of the sea.

In the greatest sorrow, Augustine resigned himself to this supreme humiliation, and to all the horrors which would have to be endured if the city were captured.

With him, at this time, were several bishops, and what remained of their flocks, — who had fled to his protection when the barbarian "Terror" assailed their habitations. Augustine was their father, their friend, their protector, up to his last hour.

The siege had lasted three months, when he fell seriously ill. He was now seventy-six years old, and had been long in failing health.

Possidonius, his biographer, was one of the fugitive bishops sheltered by him. He gives us a glimpse of the life at the episcopal residence during these sad times. "The misfortunes which we witnessed made the subject of our usual conversations. We considered the terrible judgments which Divine

justice was accomplishing before our eyes, and we said: 'Thou art just and good, O Lord, and Thy judgments are right.' We mingled our griefs, our sorrow, our tears, and we made them a sacrifice to the Father of Mercies and God of all comfort, beseeching Him to deliver us from the evils we endured and from those we feared.

"I remember one day, as we conversed with Augustine at table on the miseries of the time, he said to us: 'What I ask of God in these painful times is that He would please to deliver this city from the enemies who besiege it; or, if He has otherwise ordained it, that He will give His servants strength to endure all the evils which He shall permit to come upon them; or at least that He will withdraw me from the world, and be pleased to call me to Himself.' We profited by this instruction, and joined our prayers to his.

"In the third month of the siege he was attacked by a fever, which obliged him to keep to his bed, from which he never rose again. We saw by that, that God had not rejected the prayers of His servant, even as on other occasions He had accepted the prayers and tears asking some favor for himself or for others."

When Augustine felt death approaching, he

begged his friends and the bishops who were living with him, not to enter his room except at the same time with the physician, or those who waited upon him, that he might be interrupted as little as possible. Then he had the Penitential Psalms written in large characters and affixed to the walls of his chamber, within his sight. Thus, in solitude and prayer, he passed the last six days of his life, often repeating the words of the "Miserere": Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquities. . . . For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me."

And while this great soldier of Christ lay dying, the clangor of the trumpets calling the barbarians to the renewal of the siege, and then the woeful sounds of the terrible onslaught, came distinctly to his ears. It seemed as if everything which he had fought for was doomed to destruction. Tears streamed down his cheeks, as with clasped hands he prayed for deliverance from the evils encompassing the city. His prayers were heard, but not until after his death was Hippo delivered from its enemies, by the raising of the siege.

On the night of August 28th, 430, the moment of death arrived. Surrounded by his community

and the refugee bishops, softly chanting the psalms which he loved, the great soul of Augustine took its flight into the presence of his Maker and his Judge. The Bishop of Hippo was dead.

He was one of the greatest saints of the Church; a man of vast genius and great affections. No man since St. Paul has so widely, deeply and permanently influenced the Church of Christ. His ardent nature, his emotional temperament, his love of all things beautiful, his gentleness and tenderness towards even the least of God's creatures, his very faults and failings, making an appeal to us that has won for him the title "the most human of all the saints."

Date Due

~~NO 9 - '42~~

FACULTY

23 45

47

1875

~~MIN 5 1970~~
~~5 1970~~

~~OCT 19 1988~~

APR 1 6 1990

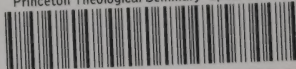
~~NOV 12 2007~~



BW317 .M95

Augustine of Hippo : "the first modern

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00061 9561